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DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

*VOL. I.*





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HIS FAMILY-LETTERS

WITH A MEMOIR

BY

WILLIAM MICHAEL ROSSETTI

MANUS ANIMAM PINXIT

*VOL. I.*



BOSTON  
ROBERTS BROTHERS

1895



DEDICATED TO  
MY FOUR CHILDREN  
WITH A FATHER'S HOPE  
THAT RELATIVES OF  
DANTE AND CHRISTINA ROSSETTI  
AND DESCENDANTS OF  
GABRIELE AND FRANCES ROSSETTI  
WILL UPHOLD THE CREDIT OF  
THEIR PATRONYMIC.

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## P R E F A C E.

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I N his *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (1882) Mr. Hall Caine has informed us: "It was always known to be Rossetti's wish that, if at any moment after his death it should appear that the story of his life required to be written, the one friend who, during many of his later years, knew him most intimately, and to whom he unlocked the most sacred secrets of his heart, Mr. Theodore Watts, should write it, unless indeed it were undertaken by his brother William."

Dante Rossetti died on 9 April 1882; and after the lapse of a few months I decided to put his Family-Letters into shape for early publication. Mr. Watts acquiesced in the wish which I then entertained, and which I should still entertain, that he, rather than myself, should be the biographer, writing a Memoir to accompany the Letters. Doubtless he saw reason for not producing his Memoir so soon as I had been expecting it; therefore, after a rather long interval of years, I resolved in July 1894 that the Letters must now come out, and, as they could not be unlinked with a Memoir, that I myself would write it. The result is before the reader. If he would have preferred a Memoir from Mr. Watts, I sympathize with him, but the option had ceased to be mine. There are several reasons why a brother neither is nor can be the best biographer. Feeling this, I had always intended

*not* to write a Life of Dante Rossetti. But circumstances have proved too strong for me, and I submit to their dictate.

Had the book been published towards 1883, the Letters would have extended very little beyond those addressed to my Mother and to myself. There were then also a couple to my Father, and a very few to my Sister Christina. I am now enabled to add some to my Grandfather Gaetano Polidori, my Uncle Henry Francis Polydore, my Aunt Charlotte Lydia Polidori, and my Wife Lucy Madox Rossetti; also some others to Christina which, as they contain expressions of approval with regard to her writings, she had herself withheld. No letters to other members of the family appear to be in existence, though several must have been written.

The technical arrangement of the printed correspondence can easily be understood. The letters are all thrown into a single sequence, according to the order of date: they are lettered from A to H, for the persons respectively addressed, and each sub-division is progressively numbered within its own limits. In every case where a letter seems to require any explanatory note or observation, I have supplied this in a few preliminary words. The dates, when not written by my brother himself, were in most cases jotted down at the time by the recipient: in a few instances, where this was omitted, the dates now given are approximate. Addresses are also frequently inserted in like manner. I have preserved (and must ask the reader to pardon my mentioning so minute a point) one instance of each form of subscribed name; and have also reproduced the name in other cases where it seems more apposite to do so. In contrary instances I omit both the name and the words of subscription which precede it. Some other Family-Letters exist, addressed to the same

persons ; but these are such as even a brother cannot suppose to be of any public interest. From those here collected some passages are omitted which, on one ground or another, are considered to be unsuited for printing ; but on the whole I have been sparing of excisions. Of the items admitted, several are indeed short and scrappy ; I have not however included anything which appears to me to be entirely uninteresting to persons interested in Dante Rossetti. Some letters, otherwise slight, fix the date of a picture or poem ; others show some trait of character, or contain some pointed or diverting expression.

The letters, such as they are, shall be left to speak mainly for themselves. Their language is constantly unadorned, often colloquial ; the tone of mind in them, concentrated ; the feeling, while solid and sincere, uneffusive. Their subject-matter is very generally personal to the writer, without discursiveness of outlook, or eloquent or picturesque description ; yet the spirit is not egotistical or self-assertive. If I am wrong in these opinions, the reader will decide the point for himself.

My brother was a rapid letter-writer, and on occasion a very prompt one, but not negligent or haphazard. He always wrote to the point, without amplification, or any effort after the major or minor graces of diction or rhetoric. Multitudes of his letters must still presumably be extant in private hands : a representative collection of them might be found to confirm the impression which I should like to ensue from the present series—that as a correspondent he was straightforward, pleasant, and noticeably free from any calculated self-display. “Disinvolto” would be the Italian word.

Some persons may approve, others will disapprove, of the publication of these Family-Letters. I print them because the doing so commends itself to my own mind. At a very

childish age I was familiar with the old apologue of the Man and his Son and the Donkey : it impressed me as equally true and practical. I have always been conscious that opinions will be as numerous as readers, and prefer to suit the opinions of those who happen to agree with myself.

Recently I have had a painful reason for realizing to myself a very pleasurable fact—that of the high estimation in which my brother, himself no less than his work, is now publicly held, some thirteen years after he passed away. The death of my beloved sister Christina, on 29 December 1894, called forth a flood of not undeserved but assuredly very fervent praise ; and in the eulogies of her were intermixed many warm tributes to my brother — I might say, without a dissentient voice.

As regards my Memoir, I, having large knowledge and numerous materials, have not consulted a single person except Christina, who, during the earlier weeks of my undertaking, gave me orally the benefit of many reminiscences relating chiefly to years of childhood, and often kept me right upon details as to which I should have stumbled. On her bed of pain and rapidly approaching death she preserved a singularly clear recollection of olden facts, and was cheered in going over them with me.

Some readers of the Memoir may be inclined to ask me—“ Have you told everything, of a substantial kind, that you know about your deceased brother ? ”—My answer shall be given beforehand, and without disguise : “ No ; I have told what I choose to tell, and have left untold what I do not choose to tell ; if you want more, be pleased to consult some other informant.”

One word in conclusion. In case the present book should find favour with the public, I should be disposed to rummage

among my ample stock of materials, and produce a number of details relating not only to my brother, but also to other members or connexions of the family. But at the age of sixty-five a man finds the horizon of his work narrowed, and rapidly narrowing ; and possibly this will not be.

W. M. ROSSETTI.

ST. EDMUND'S TERRACE, LONDON.

*April 1895.*



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## ERRATA.

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- Page xxi, line 12 from bottom, *for Morle read Mort*  
 „ 14, line 11, *for dark-speaking read dark speaking*  
 „ 54 „ 8, *for Rufini read Ruffini*  
 „ 59 „ 6, *for Fitz-Eustace read De Wilton*  
 „ 119, lines 14, 15, *for I have not the least recollection of what it was read the*  
     *Study in the manner of the Early Masters*  
 „ 135, line 5, *for Fuhrich read Steinle*  
 „ 166 „ 11, *for never read hardly*  
 „ 199 „ 17 etc., *for I do not know—etc. to end of paragraph, read These ex-*  
     *pressions occur in a letter to Mr. Skelton*  
 „ 235 „ 19, *for the earlier days of 1864 read August 1863*  
 „ 254 „ 21, *for perhaps in 1863 read in 1864*  
 „ 274 „ 17 etc., *for I cannot say—down to prominent among them read Two of*  
     *these friends were Mr. Scott and Mr. Howell; perhaps also Mr.*  
     *Henry Virtue Tebbs—down to Doctors' Commons*  
 „ 290 „ 6 from bottom, *for forgot read forget*  
 „ 304 „ 16, *for while read wile*  
 „ 336 „ 22, *for public read published*  
 „ 359 „ 4 from bottom, *for latter read former*  
 „ 401 „ 21, *for if not read and indeed*  
 „ 409 „ last, *for XXX read IX*  
 „ 418 „ 17, *for lkely read likely*  
 „ 436 „ 2, *for reputations read reputation,*  
 „ „ 9, *for object read objects*



MEMOIR  
OF  
DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI  
BY  
WILLIAM MICHAEL ROSSETTI.

Be sure that Love ordained for souls more meek  
His roadside dells of rest.



## I.

### BIRTH.

GABRIEL CHARLES DANTE ROSSETTI, commonly known as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was born on 12 May 1828, at No. 38 Charlotte Street, Portland Place, London. This house is the last or most northerly house, but one,<sup>1</sup> on the right-hand or eastern side of the street, as you turn into it to the left, down Weymouth Street, out of Portland Place. Charlotte Street, beyond No. 39, forms a *cul-de-sac*. The infant was baptized at the neighbouring All Souls' Church, Langham Place, as a member of the Church of England. From his father he received the name Gabriel; from his godfather the name Charles; and from poetical and literary associations the name Dante. His godfather was Mr. Charles Lyell, of Kinnordy, Kirriemuir, Forfarshire; a keen votary of Dante and Italian literature, a helpful friend to our father, and himself father of the celebrated geologist, Sir Charles Lyell. Some living members of the Lyell family continue to be well known to the present generation.

## II.

### PARENTAGE.

OUR parents were Gabriele Pasquale Giuseppe Rossetti (always called Gabriele Rossetti), and Frances Mary Lavinia

<sup>1</sup> No. 39 is now to the right hand of No. 38. It appears to me that this was not the case when we lived in No. 38, but that that was then the last house of all. The closed-up end of the street has been wholly altered since my boyish days.

Rossetti, *née* Polidori; and, before proceeding further with my narrative, I shall give some particulars about them, and about other members of the family.

Gabriele Rossetti was born on 28 February 1783, in the city of Vasto, named also (by a corruption from Longobard nomenclature) Vasto Ammone, in the Province of Abruzzo Citeriore, on the Adriatic coast of the then Kingdom of Naples. Vasto is a very ancient place, a municipal town of the Romans, then designated Histonium. We are not bound—though some enthusiasts feel themselves permitted—to believe that it was founded by the Homeric hero Diomed: its patron saint is the Archangel Michael. Gabriele was the youngest son of Nicola Rossetti, and his wife Maria Francesca, *née* Pietrocola. Nicola Rossetti was a Blacksmith, of very moderate means;<sup>1</sup> a man of somewhat severe and irascible nature, whose death ensued not long after the French-republican invasion of the Kingdom of Naples in 1799. The French put some affront upon him—I believe they gave him a smart beating for failing or neglecting to furnish required provisions; and, being unable to stomach this, or to resent it as he would have liked, his health declined, and soon he was no more. His wife belonged to a local family of fair credit: but, like other Italian women of that period, she received no scholastic training; she could not write nor even read. The name Rossetti might be translated into “Ruddykins” or “Redkins” as an English

<sup>1</sup> A Vastese connexion of mine, Signor Giuseppe Marchesani, favoured me, early in 1895, with a number of mortuary and other inscriptions which he had composed to various members of the family. I will give here the one relating to Nicola Rossetti, who probably remains otherwise unrecorded, unless by some “forlorn hic jacet.” Of course anything written in a lapidary style reads less well in my English than in Marchesani’s Italian. “Nicola Rossetti, Blacksmith poor and honourable, lovingly sent in boyhood to their first studies his sons, carefully nurtured in childhood. If Fortune neglected him, provident Nature ultimately distinguished, in the obscure Artizan, the well-graced Father, who, to the strokes of his hammer on the battered anvil, sent forth the sonorous and glorious echo, beyond remote Abruzzo, into Italy and other lands.”

equivalent. My father used to say that the Rossetti race was an offshoot of the Della Guardia family, well known and still subsisting in Vasto; and that at some date or other certain children of the Della Guardia stock were noted for florid complexion and reddish hair, and thus got called "the Rossetti," in accordance with the Italian hobby for nicknames, and that this name gradually stuck to them as a patronymic.

Nicola and Maria Francesca Rossetti had a rather large family, four sons and three daughters, and three of the sons earned distinction. There was Domenico, who was versed (as a local historian records) "in medical science, in civil and canonical law, and in theology," writing in Italian, Latin, French, and to some extent Hebrew, and was "the first among mortals who daringly descended into the Grotto of Montecalvo near Nice." On this theme he wrote a poem in three cantos, besides other poems (two volumes, printed in Parma) and prose: he was besides an Improvisatore. Born in 1772, he died comparatively young in 1816. There was also Andrea, the eldest brother, who became a Canon of San Giuseppe in Vasto; and thirdly, Gabriele, whom I may be excused for regarding as a more important writer than even the polyglot Domenico. I might include, as showing that verse-writing ran in the family, the fourth son, Antonio, who exercised the humble calling of a wig-maker and barber: he likewise versified in an off-hand popular manner, and was of some note to his fellow-townsmen.

Gabriele Rossetti came into the world well endowed for the arts. As it turned out, he took to poetry and other forms of literature; but he might equally have excelled in drawing or in vocal music. I have before me as I write three MSS. containing specimens of his early skill as a draughtsman, done when he was twenty years old or thereabouts. The drawings are illustrations to poems (juvenile enough) of his own composition, and are surprisingly precise and dainty in execution. One would have little hesitation in calling them copper-engravings; but they are, in fact, pen-designs done with sepia, which he himself extracted

from the cuttlefish or "calamarello," so dear to Neapolitan gourmands. An ornamental headpiece, two decorative title-pages, and two landscapes founded on traditions of Claude or Gaspar Poussin, are his own inventions. One drawing is a group of two women after Mignard ; and two or three others may also be copies. From my earliest childhood I have looked with astonishment on these performances as pieces of manipulation ; and, after a lifetime spent among artists, I hardly know what to put beside them in their own limited line of attempt. Then, as to music, Gabriele had a beautiful tenor-voice, sweet and sonorous in a high degree. It received no regular cultivation, but was such that he was more than once urged to train himself for the operatic stage—a mode of life, however, for which he had no sort of inclination.

The local magnate was the Marchese del Vasto, of the great historic house of D'Avalos, into which the famous Vittoria Colonna married. He was feudal Lord of the Vastese, and they acknowledged themselves his "vassals," though this state of things, in the epoch of a Robespierre and a Napoleon, was not destined to continue long. The attention of the Marchese was soon called to the uncommon promise of his growing-up vassal Gabriele Rossetti, and, after some well-conducted schooling in Vasto, the youth was sent in 1804, under the patronage of this nobleman, to study in the University of Naples. His education here was cut short after a year and a month, and consequently had not a very wide range. In middle life he read Latin with ease, and retained some remnant of geometry and mathematics, but of Greek he had no knowledge. In French he was well versed, speaking the language with great fluency and an amusing assumption of the tone of a Frenchman. English he acquired by practice in Malta and in this country, and could both read and talk it tolerably enough, though he never did so when he had the option of Italian.

Rossetti was just twenty-three years of age when the Bourbon king, Ferdinand I., was turned out of his con-

tinental dominion, and had to retire into Sicily, and Joseph Bonaparte reigned in his stead. With Ferdinand vanished the Marchese del Vasto, who was his Court-Majordomo. Thus all the years of Rossetti's early manhood were passed in association with a Napoleonic and not a Bourbon order of ideas. As a sequel to his first volume of poems, published in 1807, he obtained an appointment as librettist in the operatic theatre of San Carlo, writing three or more operabooks, one of them named *Giulio Sabino*. He was kept in hot water, however, by the exigencies of managers and vocalists, and got transferred to the Curatorship of Ancient Marbles and Bronzes in the Museum of Naples. He figured in the Academy of the Arcadi as "Filidauro Labidiense." There used to be a catch,—

"Rossini, Rossetti,  
Divini, imperfetti";

but whether my father was ever linked with Rossini in any operatic production I am unable to say. Rossetti was well received at the Court of King Joachim (Murat), the successor of Joseph. I have heard him say that he knew something of almost all the Bonapartes, except only the great Napoleon. I possess a slight portrait of him done by the Princess Charlotte Bonaparte; and another of the family, Lady Dudley Stuart, acted as godmother to his daughter Christina. In my own time Prince Pierre Bonaparte (too notorious as the homicide of Victor Noir) was frequently in our house; occasionally also Prince Louis Napoleon, the unduly glorified and duly execrated Napoleon III., of whom my father would emphatically declare that he could never trace in him one grain (*neppure un' ombra*) of Liberalism. King Joachim fell in 1815, and King Ferdinand was restored to his capital city, Naples; a state of things not likely to be much to the taste of Gabriele Rossetti—who in 1813 had acted as Secretary to that part of the provisional government, sent by Joachim to Rome, which looked after public instruction and the fine arts. He did not, however, under the

restored Bourbon, lose his post in the Museum. An agitation ensued for a constitution similar to that which the Spaniards established in 1819—the secret society of the Carbonari, in which Rossetti was a member of the General Assembly, being especially active in this direction. In 1820 there was a military uprising, and Ferdinand had to grant the constitution—probably with a fixed intention of revoking it at the first opportunity. Rossetti's ode to the Dawn of the Constitution-day, "*Sei pur bella cogli astri sul crine*" ("Lovely art thou with stars in hair"), was in every Neapolitan mouth. In 1821 the king, then sojourning in Austria, abolished the constitution, and suppressed it with the aid of Austrian troops. Carbonarism was made a capital offence, and the leading constitutionalists were denounced and proscribed, among them Rossetti. He is said to have been viewed by the king with especial abhorrence, partly because various writings, not really his, were attributed to him, and partly because one of his lyrics contained the lines—

"I Sandi ed' i Luvelli  
Non son finiti ancor,"

(Sands and Louvels are not yet extinct.) The reference, it will be perceived, is to the political assassination of Kotzebue by Sand, and of the Duc de Berri by Louvel, with a suggestion that a like fate might easily befall King Ferdinand. Rossetti did not say that it *ought* to befall him; but the king was not inclined to take a good-natured view of the matter, or to construe the phrase rather as a loyal warning than as an incitement to a deed of blood. The peccant poet lay concealed in Naples for three months, beginning in March 1821; finally the British admiral, Sir Graham Moore, pressed by his generous wife who knew and liked Rossetti, furnished him with a British uniform, got him off in a carriage to the harbour, and shipped him to Malta. I have before me a printed proclamation of King Ferdinand—the original document, dated 28 September 1822—granting an amnesty to persons concerned in the revolutionary or

constitutional movement, with the exception of thirteen men expressly named. My father is the thirteenth. In Malta he remained about two years and a half, holding classes (as indeed he had previously done in Naples) for instruction in the Latin and Italian languages and literature, and most liberally befriended by the English poet and diplomatist, John Hookham Frere, the translator of Aristophanes: their amicable relations continued after distance had separated them. Deep indeed were the affection and respect which Rossetti entertained for Frere. One of my vivid reminiscences is of the day when the death of Frere was announced to him,<sup>1</sup> in 1846. With tears in his half-sightless eyes and the passionate fervour of a southern Italian, my father fell on his knees, and exclaimed, "*Anima bella, benedetta sii tu, dovunque sei!*"<sup>2</sup>

Rossetti had long been a noted Improvisatore, as well as a poet in the accustomed way (he continued to improvise to some extent for a while, even after coming to London), and this, with his other gifts, made him popular in Maltese society. After a while, however, he was harassed by the spies or other emissaries of the Bourbon Government, which embittered his position so much that he resolved to have done with Malta, and settle in England. Here he arrived in January or February 1824, and fixed himself in London. He soon made acquaintance with the Polidori family, and a mutual attachment united him in marriage with the second daughter, Frances Mary Lavinia, in April 1826. He subsisted by teaching Italian, and held perhaps the foremost place in that vocation. In 1831 he was appointed Professor of Italian in King's College, London. This professorship was not a sinecure; but the students were few, and became fewer from about 1840 onwards, when the German language began decidedly to supersede the Italian in public favour. My

<sup>1</sup> The person who announced it was Mr. Edward Graham, the associate of Shelley in early youth. He had taken to the musical profession, and was a man of uncommonly handsome presence: his bodily were superior to his mental endowments.

<sup>2</sup> "Noble soul, blessed be thou wherever thou art."

father made at the best a very moderate income ; yet this sufficed for all the requirements of himself, and his wife and four children, and no man could be more heartily contented with what he got—more strenuous and cheerful in working for it, or more willing “to cut his coat” (he never *turned* it) “according to his cloth.” The British religion of “keeping up appearances” was unknown—thank Heaven—in my paternal home ; my father disregarded it from temperament and foreign way of thinking and living, and my mother contemned it with modest or noble superiority. The tolerably thriving condition of our household declined with my father’s decline in health, which began towards 1842 : interruption of professional work, waning employment, inability to take up such employment as offered, necessarily ensued. In 1843 (having hitherto had uncommonly keen eyesight) he suddenly lost one eye through amaurosis, and the other eye was greatly weakened and in constant peril, though he was never bereft of sight totally. A real tussle for the means of subsistence now arose, but by one method or other all was tided over. Our scale of living, if somewhat more threadbare and dingy, did not materially dwindle from its unassuming yet comfortable average ; and no butcher nor baker nor candlestick-maker ever had a claim upon us for a sixpence unpaid. In his closing years my father had more than one stroke of paralysis. Some of these were of a formidable kind ; yet he got over them to a substantial extent, lived on in a suffering state of body, and with mental faculties weakened, though not impaired in any definite and absolute way, and continued diligent in reading and writing almost to the last day of his life. His sufferings, often severe, were borne with patience and courage (he had an ample stock of both qualities), though not with that unemotional calm which would have been foreign to his Italian nature. For nearly a year before his death he lived, with his wife and daughter Christina, at Frome Selwood in Somerset ; but finally he returned to London, and died at No. 166 Albany Street, Regent’s Park, on 26 April 1854, firm-minded and placid, and glad to be

released, in the presence of all his family. His young cousin, Teodorico Pietrocola-Rossetti, was also there. He lies buried in Highgate Cemetery.

Gabriele Rossetti was a man of energetic and lively temperament, of warm affections, sensitive to slight or rebuff, and well capable of repelling it, devoted to his family and home, full of good-nature and good-humour, a fervent patriot, honourable and aboveboard in all his dealings, and as pleasant and inspiring company as one could wish to meet. Though sensitive as above stated, he was not in the least quarrelsome, and never began a conflict about either literary or personal matters: this disposition he transmitted to his son Dante Gabriel. For some years after settling in London he went a good deal into society, and was welcomed in several houses. This had diminished at the date of my earliest reminiscences, and soon it had wholly ceased. He could tell an amusing story most capitally—I have hardly known his equal at that—with good dramatic “take-off”; and, though his ordinary speech was, to the best of my judgment, very pure Italian, he could readily throw himself back, when he liked, into the Neapolitan dialect, or the Abruzzese, which is not a little provincial.<sup>1</sup> He always spoke Italian in the family, never English; and his children from the earliest years, as well as his wife, answered in Italian. Apart from domestic simplicity or sportiveness, his conversation was always high-minded, implying a solid standard of public and private virtue: nothing about it mean or sly or worldly, or tampering with principle. There was indeed a certain tinge of self-opinion or self-applause in his temperament; he rather liked “to ride the high horse” (as I have heard my brother phrase

<sup>1</sup> I possess two good books showing the dialect of Vasto, sent to me by the courtesy of their authors: the *Vocabolario dell' Uso Abruzzese*, by Gennaro Finamore, and the *Fujj' Ammesche*, by Luigi Anelli. The latter volume is a series of sonnets, which appear to me highly excellent of their popular kind. When I say that the Vastese words “Fujj' Ammesche” represent the Italian words “Foglie Miste,” my English reader will be able to judge whether Vastese is a pure or impure form of Italian.

it); but this was quite free from envy or disparagement of others, and did no one any harm. Of what one calls "personal vanity" he had a plentiful lack, and was indeed very careless (like many other Italians) in all matters of the outer man. As a father he was most kind, and would often allow his four children to litter and rollick about the room while he plodded through some laborious matter of literary composition. He always retained, however, a perceptible tone of the *patria potestas*. Rossetti was a splendid declaimer or reciter, with perfect elocution. He put his heart into whatsoever he did. His MSS. are models of fine and minute penmanship, and show enormous pains in the way of revision and recasting.

He was an ardent lover of liberty, in thought and in the constitution of society. In religion he was mainly a free-thinker, strongly anti-papal and anti-sacerdotal, but not inclined, in a Protestant country, to abjure the faith of his fathers. He never attended any place of worship. Spite of his free-thinking, he had the deepest respect for the moral and spiritual aspects of the Christian religion, and in his later years might almost be termed an unsectarian and undogmatic Christian. As a freethinker, he was naturally exempt from popular superstitions—did not believe in ghosts, second sight, etc.; and the same statement holds good of our mother. In this respect Dante Gabriel, as soon as his mind got a little formed, differed from his parents; being quite willing to entertain, in any given case, the question whether a ghost or demon had made his appearance or not, and having indeed a decided bias towards suspecting that he had. One point, however, of popular superstition, or I should rather say of superstitious habit, my father had not discarded. A fancy existed in the Abruzzi (I dare say it still exists) that, if one steps over a child seated or lying on the ground, the child's growth would be arrested; and I have more than once seen my father divert his path to avoid stepping over any one of us. In politics he belonged more to the party of constitutional monarchy than to that of republicanism, but welcomed

anything that told for freedom. He always advocated the *unity* of Italy, long before that aspiration was considered a very practical one; indeed, I have seen him described, on good authority, as the *first* apostle of unity, but am not clear that this is strictly accurate.

In estimating Rossetti's work as a national or patriotic poet, and his general attitude of mind in matters of politics, or of government in State and Church, we should remember the conditions (already referred to) under which his life had been passed. He was born under the feudal and despotic system of the Neapolitan Bourbons; his youth witnessed the more open-minded but still despotic Napolconic rule; the Bourbon restoration brought-on a constitution sworn to by the sovereign, who soon after perjured himself in suppressing it; lifelong exile ensued to Rossetti and other constitutionalists. Then he lived through many abortive insurrections against the temporal and ecclesiastical dominators of Italy; through the brilliant promise and the retrogression of Pope Pius IX. (whom at first he acclaimed with unmeasured fervour); through the high deeds, glorious prospects, and dolorous collapse, of the revolutionary years 1848-49, and through the fuliginous beginnings of the Neapolitan King Bomba; followed by a genuinely liberal government in Piedmont under Victor Emmanuel and Cavour, by the *coup d'état* of Napoleon III., and by general stagnancy of political thought and act throughout Europe. He died five years before 1859, which produced the alliance between France and Piedmont, the expulsion of the Austrians from Lombardy, and the commencement of the unification of Italy. When he died in 1854 the outlook seemed extremely dark; yet heart and hope did not abate in him. The latest letter of his which I have seen published was written in September or October 1853, and contains this passage, equally strong-spirited and prophetic—

“The *Arpa Evangelica* . . . ought to find free circulation through all Italy. I do not say the like of three other unpublished volumes, which all seethe with love of country and hatred for tyrants. These

await a better time—which will come, be very sure of it. The present fatal period will pass, and serves to whet the universal desire. . . . Let us look to the future. Our tribulations, dear madam, will not finish very soon, but finish they will at last. Reason has awakened in all Europe, although her enemies are strong. We shall pass various years in this state of degradation ; then we shall rouse up. I assuredly shall not see it, for day by day, nay hour by hour, I expect the much-longed-for death ; but *you* will see it.”

In person Gabriele Rossetti was rather below the middle height, and full in flesh till his health failed ; with a fine brow, a marked prominent nose and large nostrils, dark-speaking eyes, pleasant mouth, engaging smile, and genuine laugh. He indulged in gesticulation, not to any great extent, but of course more than an Englishman. His hands were rather small—not a little spoiled by a life-long habit of munching his nails. As to other personal habits, I may mention free snuff-taking without any smoking ; and a hearty appetite while health lasted, with more of vegetable diet than Englishmen use. In his later years teeth and palate had failed, and all viands “tasted like hay.” Fermented liquors he only touched seldom and sparingly. He had liked the English beer, but had to leave it off altogether in 1836, to avoid recurrent attacks of gout. In fact, he liked most things English—the national and individual liberty, the constitution, the people and their moral tone, though the British leaven of social Toryism was far from being to his taste. He certainly preferred the English nation, on the whole, to the French, and had a kind of prepossession against Frenchwomen, which he pushed to a humorous over-plus in speech—saying for instance that, if a Frenchwoman and himself were to be the sole tenants of an otherwise uninhabited island, the human race on that island would decidedly not be prolonged into a second generation. My father also took very kindly to the English coal-fires, and was an adept in keeping them up ; he would jocularly speak of “buying his climate at the coal-merchant’s.” In all my earlier years I used frequently to see my father come home in the dusk rather fagged with his

round of teaching, and after dining he would lie down flat on the hearthrug close by the fire, and fall asleep for an hour or two, snoring vigorously. Beside him would stand up our old familiar tabby cat, poised on her haunches, and holding on by the fore-claws inserted into the fender-wires, warming her furry front. Her attitude (I have never seen any feline imitation of it) was peculiar, somewhat in the shape of a capital Y—"the cat making the Y" was my father's phrase for this performance. She was the mother of a numerous progeny; one of her daughters—also long an inmate of our house—was a black-and-white cat named Zoe by my elder sister Maria, who had a fancy for anything Greekish; but Zoe never made a Y.

Rossetti had produced a tolerable amount of verse in Italy, also the descriptive account (which passes under the name of Cavalier Finati) of the Naples Museum; but all his more solid and voluminous writing was done after he had settled in London. The principal works are as follows: 1826—*Dante, Commedia* (the *Inferno* alone was published), with a Commentary aiming to show that the poem is chiefly political and anti-papal in its inner meaning. A great deal of controversy was excited at the time by this work, and by others which succeeded it. 1832—*Lo Spirito Antipapale che produsse la Riforma* (*The Anti-Papal Spirit which produced the Reformation*), following up and extending the same line of thought. An English translation was also published. 1833—*Iddio e l'Uomo, Salterio* (*God and Man, a Psalter*), poems. The two last-named books have the honour of being in the Pontifical *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, edition 1838, and perhaps others are there now. 1840—*Il Mistero dell' Amor Platonico del Medio Evo* (*The Mysterious Platonic Love of the Middle Ages*), five volumes; a book of daring and elaborately ingenious speculation, enforcing the analogy of many illustrious writers, as forming a secret society of anti-Catholic thought, with the doctrines of Gnosticism and Freemasonry (Rossetti was himself a Freemason). This book was printed and prepared for publication, but was withheld

(partly at the instance of Mr. Frere) as likely to be accounted rash and subversive. 1842—*La Beatrice di Dante*, contending that Dante's Beatrice was a symbolic personage, not a real woman. 1846—*Il Veggente in Solitudine* (*The Seer in Solitude*), a poem of patriotic aim, in a discursive and rhapsodical form, embodying a good deal of autobiography and of earlier material. It circulated largely though clandestinely in Italy, and a medal of Rossetti was struck there in commemoration. 1847—*Versi* (miscellaneous poems). 1852—*L'Arpa Evangelica* (*The Evangelic Harp*), religious poems.

As regards my father's writings on Dante and other authors—the outcome of an immense amount of miscellaneous, often curious and abstruse, reading—I may be allowed to say that I regard his views and arguments as cogent, without being convincing. They affect one more in beginning one of his books than in ending it. He certainly made some mistakes, and urged some details to a wiredrawn or futile extreme, and in especial he was not sufficiently master of the happy instinct when to leave off, so that his longest and most important book, the *Mistero dell' Amor Platonico*, becomes cumbrous with subsidiary matter. In his poems also he was over-fond of amplifying and loading, being too unwilling to leave a composition as it stood; though he wrote with great mastery and ease, and a brilliant command of metre, rhythm, and melody. Many snatches of his verse are forcible and moving in a high degree, and rouse a contagious enthusiasm. He has left in MS. a versified account of his life, written between 1846 and 1851. It is not long, nor yet very short, and is about the completest as well as the most authentic account that exists of his career. I should like to translate it some day, and publish it in England.

To give some idea of Rossetti's poetry, I cannot do better than extract here one of the remarks upon it made by the pre-eminent Italian poet of our own day, Giosuè Carducci, in a selection from Rossetti which he edited in 1861. Carducci, after contrasting him with some of his contemporary writers, terms him—

“The singer who, notwithstanding his defects, conforms the most to the poetic taste and the harmonic faculty of the Italian people. No plethora of murky inventions, and of recondite and strange forms, and of versified disquisitions, and of nebulous swathings; but a daring and serene fancy, impetus of emotion, plenteousness and sometimes superabundance of colouring, facility, harmony, melody, make these poems truly Italian, make them singable. Singable, I say; and I know that this praise may, in the opinion of some, amount to blame, now that for the most part singable poetry is of the worst.”

Not in Vasto alone, but in all Italy, Rossetti's reputation as a patriotic poet stood high—more perhaps among the men of action and the ardent youth than among the critical assessors of literary merit. A proposal was made to transfer his remains to a sepulchre in Italy, as an act of national recognition. My mother having demurred, an inscription was set up to him in the Florentine cloister of Santa Croce, which counts as the Italian Walhalla or Westminster Abbey. In Vasto the centenary of his birth was celebrated in 1883 with much evidence of enthusiasm. The principal Piazza (del Pesce, as first entitled) and the Communal Theatre are named after him; and it has long been proposed—though perhaps rather half-heartedly—to erect his statue, and to purchase for the town the house in a part of which he was born—an ancient and somewhat stately-looking though plain edifice, battered by time and neglect. I am tempted to extract here a few of the many eulogiums pronounced upon Rossetti at the centenary—not unconscious, however, of the caution with which any utterances on such an occasion are to be received.

From the speech of Professor Francesco di Rosso :—

“He then conceived that love of his oppressed country, and that indignation against the oppressors, which were to be (as I may say) the religion of his entire life, and were to dictate to him the most beautiful strains, and make him the Tyrtæus of the battles of the Italian liberty, unity, and independence, the poet sacred to Italy and Europe labouring under tyranny, under political and religious re-action.”

From the speech of the sub-prefect Cavalier Domenico Fabretti :—

“Many were the public-spirited poets of Italy: but none conjectured the cycle of her evolution, shadowed forth its agents, designed its forms, with the forecasting precision, the exact intuition, of your Rossetti. He was not only the sweet poet of the Arcadian stylus, was not only the studious and elegant verse-writer, was not only the fervent patriot, but was the seer of the Italian re-arising.”

From a pamphlet by signor Adelfo Mayo,<sup>1</sup> addressed to the workmen of Vasto :—

“You, citizens and workmen, will deserve well of your country if you will imitate the domestic and civil virtues of that great man, if you strive with all your efforts to preserve intact the sacred deposit of the Italian liberties under the sceptre of the Kings of Savoy, and if you also co-operate, as best you may, in raising a worthy monument to one who, conferring honour upon our city, has honoured likewise the Abruzzi and the entire peninsula.”

In England very little has got into print showing Gabriele Rossetti “in his habit as he lived.” There are, however, two recent books which give an idea of him in his later years, and in each instance the idea is a true one as far as it goes. Mr. William Bell Scott’s *Autobiographical Notes* (1892) contain the following passage, relating to the close of 1847 or beginning of 1848 :—

“I entered the small front parlour or dining-room of the house [50 Charlotte Street], and found an old gentleman sitting by the fire in a great chair, the table drawn close to his chair, with a thick manuscript book open before him, and the largest snuff-box I ever saw beside it conveniently open. He had a black cap on his head furnished with a great peak or shade for the eyes, so that I saw his face only partially. . . . The old gentleman signed to a chair for

<sup>1</sup> With this fine-minded and cultivated gentleman, well meriting his high position in the Vastese community, I have had the pleasure of keeping up some correspondence ever since the date of the centenary meeting.

my sitting down, and explained that his son was now painting in the studio he and a young friend had taken together: this young friend's name was Holman Hunt.<sup>1</sup> . . . The old gentleman's pronunciation of English was very Italian; and, though I did not know that, both of them—he and his daughter [Christina]—were probably at that moment writing poetry of some sort, and might wish me far enough, I left very soon.”

The second portrait of my father, and a very good one it is, is traced by Mr. Frederic George Stephens in his monograph named *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (1894): it shows a memory highly retentive of characterizing details:—

“As might be expected of one possessing so many accomplishments, and whose career had been marked by so much courage, the Professor was a man of striking character and aspect; so that, when I was introduced to him in 1848 [some few months perhaps after Mr. Scott's first visit to our house], and his grand climacteric was past, and (as with most Italians) a life of studies told upon him heavily, I could not but be struck with the noble energy of his face, and by the high culture his expression attested, while a sort of eager, almost passionate resolution seemed to glow in all he said and did. To a youngster, such as I was then, he seemed much older than his years; and, while seated reading at a table with two candles behind him, and (because his sight was failing) with a wide shade over his eyes, he looked a very Rembrandt come to life. The light was reflected from a manuscript placed close to his face, and, in the shadow which covered them, made distinct all the fineness and vigour of his sharply moulded features. It was half lost upon his somewhat shrunken figure wrapped in a student's dressing-gown, and shone fully upon the lean, bony, and delicate

<sup>1</sup> According to Mr. Scott, this was his first call at No. 50 Charlotte Street, and the interview took place “about Christmas 1847-48.” I consider that the correct date of his first call was in December 1847 or January 1848. But Mr. Scott's memory must have been entirely wrong as to his then hearing about the studio shared by Holman Hunt and Dante Rossetti, for there was no such sharing of any studio until late in August 1848, and the words put into our father's mouth, if spoken at all, must have been spoken later than “about Christmas 1847-48.” *Ex uno disce multos.*

hands in which he held the paper. He looked like an old and somewhat imperative prophet, and his voice had a slightly rigorous ring, speaking to his sons and their visitors."

I am not sure that the word "rigorous" would here convey quite the right impression. My father's address in such cases was clear and emphatic, and as if no dissent were expected to ensue; but it was not marked by anything hard or brusque.

Good-natured and indulgent though he in fact was, and animated with the most resolute desire to do his very best for the present and future of his children, our love nevertheless was chiefly concentrated upon our mother—and never did mother deserve it better. This preference may have been rather less marked in my elder sister Maria than with the rest of us. Frances Mary Lavinia Polidori was born in London, 42 Broad Street, Golden Square (the same street in which William Blake had been born forty-three years before), on 27 April 1800. Thus she was seventeen years younger than her husband. Of her parents I shall say something in my next Section. She was brought up with a view to her becoming a governess; and at the early age of sixteen she took charge of her first pupil, the adopted daughter of Mr. Thomas Dickins, of Vale Lodge, Leatherhead, Surrey. I have heard my mother say that in this house she used to see from time to time John Shelley, the brother of the poet. He was a very handsome youth, aged then some thirteen or fourteen, and all mention of the name of that world-abandoned rebel, the versifying atheist, was strictly forbidden. Hence my mother passed into the families of Mr. Justice Bolland (whom she highly respected), and of Sir Patrick Macgregor. One of her pupils, Miss Georgina Macgregor, became the second godmother of my sister, Christina Georgina. A brother of Sir Patrick, a Colonel, fell not a little in love with Miss Polidori. Whether this highly estimable gentleman (as such he was always represented to me) would have made up his mind to "proposing for the governess" I am unable to say; but anyhow he was forestalled by the Neapolitan refugee



*By D. G. Rossetti.*

GABRIELE ROSSETTI.

1853.



Rossetti, who rapidly won the damsel's heart, and was promptly accepted. The marriage proved a truly happy one, spite of narrow circumstances, and the harrassing troubles of my father's long illnesses and décaÿ. On his side there was deep unwavering affection, and the most absolute esteem and confidence; on hers, affection and confidence in no less measure, and a cordial admiration for his uncommon gifts and attainments.

Mrs. Rossetti was well bred and well educated, a constant reader, full of clear perception and sound sense on a variety of subjects, and perfectly qualified to hold her own in society; a combination of abnormal modesty of self-estimate (free, however, from the silliness or insincerity of self-disparagement), and of retirement and repose of character, and of devotion to home duties, kept her back. The idea of "making an impression" never appeared to present itself to her mind—still less the idea of outshining or rivalling any one else. I doubt whether in the whole course of my life I once saw her go out to an ordinary "evening party." Perfect simplicity of thought, speech, and manner, characterized her always; I venture to think that it was dignity under another name. For conscientiousness, veracity, the keeping confidences inviolate, the utter absence of censoriousness or tittle-tattle, she was an absolute model: all this came so natural to her that it passed almost unnoticed, or seemed a matter of course. Day and night she attended to the household—doing needlework, teaching her girls, keeping things in order, etc. In all the central years of her life there was only one servant in the house. She was deeply but unpretentiously religious, a member of the Church of England, very constant in church-attendance. In my earlier years she might be regarded as belonging rather to the "Evangelical" branch of the Church, but later on her associations grew to be of the "high church" kind. This only made a difference of habitude, not of essentials. She took a reasonable interest in matters of politics, her sympathies being on the Liberal side. She wrote correctly in prose, and some few times even in verse; but

without having, at any time of her life, any notion of doing aught for publication. I have heard that in youth she was considered rather a "quiz" (as the phrase then ran), or a person with a sharp eye for the ridiculous in others. Of this I myself remember few symptoms or none; but certainly she knew a pretender or a humbug when she saw one, and could express her perception by clear word of mouth. With all the reserve of her character, her total want of forwardness, her mostly unspoken scorn of semblances which have not realities behind them, there was nothing about her of the merely stolid or negative; her feelings were warm, and even her temper might have been less unruffled than it was, but for a life-long practice of moderating self-control. She was just, liberal, kind, forgiving, steadfast. A son who has any evil to say of his mother might feel embarrassed until he had managed to say it mildly: I am spared any such embarrassment. To sum up—she was one of the most womanly of women.

My mother once said—it may have been towards 1872 or 1873: "I always had a passion for intellect, and my wish was that my husband should be distinguished for intellect, and my children too. I have had my wish [and this she might well say in reference to her elder son and her younger daughter, not to bring the remaining two into question]; and I now wish that there were a little less intellect in the family, so as to allow for a little more common sense." I have always set store by that utterance of my mother, as equally sound and characteristic.

Frances Rossetti was of an ordinary female middle height, or a trifle less than that,<sup>1</sup> with a full-sized head, fresh complexion, features more than commonly regular, shapely

<sup>1</sup> Miss Hall Caine, in her pleasant article *A Child's Recollections of Rossetti*, in the *New Review* for September 1894, describes my mother as "very little." This is a mistake. Miss Caine only saw my mother in the early part of 1882, when the latter was nearly eighty-two years of age. Her figure had then fallen in, and she looked short; but the statement in my text is the correct one.

Madonna-like eyelids, and an air of innate composure. Her general aspect was English, not Italian. Her eyes were grey, her hair in youth abundant and pretty, worn then in long ringlets, of a full-tinted brown. It altered colour but little, even in her extreme old age ; and she always looked to me—and I believe to others—some five or six years younger than she was. Her voice was extremely clear and uniform, excellent for reading. There is a good likeness of her in one of Sir John Millais's pictures—the *Departure of the Crusaders*, painted towards 1856.

After the definite failure of my father's health, or from about 1844 until his death in 1854, the chief support of the family devolved upon my mother—the eldest child, Maria, being in 1844 only seventeen years of age. My mother made great and most laudable efforts—going out to teach French and Italian (both of which she knew and spoke perfectly well) and other things, and afterwards holding precarious day-schools—at No. 38 Arlington Street, Mornington Crescent (our residence for a year or two beginning in 1851), and at Frome Selwood. The schools produced no income of any account ; and my mother's small expectations (from the property left by her maternal grandfather), and then her small capital, had to be trenched upon. After her return however from Frome, in 1854, it no longer became necessary for her to exert herself ; she continued living with me and my two sisters, and in 1876 removed with Christina to another house, 30 Torrington Square. In her later years her hearing was imperfect, though by no means gone, and her general strength abated considerably. Her mind remained always clear, but necessarily less strong with the inroads of age. She died, rather of gradual decline than of anything else, on 8 April 1886, the very day which completed four years after the death of Dante Gabriel. Had she lived a few more days, she would have been eighty-six years of age. She rests by her husband's side in Highgate Cemetery.

I have observed that my mother "wrote correctly in prose, and some few times even in verse." It has lately been my

melancholy task to hunt through drawers, pigeon-holes, etc., in the house (30 Torrington Square) occupied by my sister Christina—of memory gracious to many—up to the date of her death, 29 December 1894. I came upon a little red writing-case, given by Dante Rossetti to our mother in 1849; in the writing-case were these verses of her composition. They are dated 1876, the year when my sister Maria Francesca died; after Dante's death in 1882 a final couplet was added. To me the lines, recording a succession of family losses, are pathetic; they come from a heart full of affection. Perhaps the reader will think it ridiculous that I should print them; at worst, the ridicule will apply to me alone, and not to the writer, who in youth and age kept all such things very much to herself.

"No longer I hear the welcome sound  
Of Father's foot upon the ground;  
No longer see the loving face  
Of Mother beam with kindly grace;  
No longer hear 'how I rejoice'  
At sight of me, from Sister's voice;<sup>1</sup>  
No more from Husband loved will be a  
'Cara Francesca, moglie mia';  
And from dear Daughter sore I miss  
'My dearest Dodo,'<sup>2</sup> and her kiss:—  
I never more shall hear him speak,  
The dearly loved who called me 'Tique.'<sup>3</sup>"

### III.

#### RELATIVES.

FRANCES ROSSETTI was the daughter of Gaetano Polidori, and of Anna Maria Polidori, *née* Pierce.

My maternal great-grandfathers were both born an immense time ago; Agostino Ansaldo Polidori in 1714, and William Pierce in 1736: strange to think of. Even my maternal

<sup>1</sup> This was Margaret, who died in 1867.

<sup>2</sup> A pet name much used by Maria for her mother.

<sup>3</sup> Dante Gabriel was addicted to calling his mother, in her later years, "the Antique," or simply "Antique," shortened sometimes into "Tique."

grandfather dates as far back as 1764, and my grandmother as far back as 1769. The year 1714 witnessed the accession of George I. to the British throne; 1736, the death of Prince Eugene; 1764, the death of Hogarth; 1769, the publication of the first *Letter of Junius*.

The name Polidori is of course Greek, not Italian; but of any Greek ancestry which there may possibly have been I know nothing. The Polidori family, so far as I ever heard of it, was Tuscan, the profession of medicine being customary from father to son; authorship was also frequent in the race, at any rate in the later generations. Agostino Ansaldo, author of two poems, *Tobias* and *Osteology* (the latter has been privately printed), was a Doctor settled at Bientina near Pisa: here was born his son Gaetano. There was also a brother of Agostino, named Francesco. He produced a poem entitled *Losario* (privately printed), more or less in the vein of Ariosto. Gaetano was intended for the law, which he studied in the University of Pisa. In 1785, however, he deserted the law, and, on the recommendation of the Abate Fassini, became secretary to the famous tragedian Conte Alfieri, with whom he stayed at Brisach, Colmar, and Paris. Naturally he saw, along with Alfieri, the Countess of Albany, whose husband, "the Young Pretender," was then still living. Polidori was in Paris at the taking of the Bastille in July 1789; and a little anecdote which he relates of that day may deserve reproduction here:—

"I was passing by the Palais Royal while the populace were running to assault the fortress; and, having encountered a highly-powdered wig-maker, with a rusty sword raised aloft, I, not expecting any such thing, and hardly conscious of the act, had the sword handed over to me, as he cried aloud—'*Prenez, citoyen, combattez pour la patrie.*' I had no fancy for such an enterprise; so, finding myself sword in hand, I at once cast about for some way to get rid of it; and, bettering my instruction from the man of powder, I stuck it into the hand of the first unarmed person I met; and, repeating, '*Prenez, citoyen, combattez pour la patrie,*' I passed on and returned home."

Polidori (as he intimates) had no taste for political convulsions, and little for politics of any sort. Almost immediately afterwards Alfieri got put out at finding that on a single occasion his secretary was not at home when summoned, and the Count wrote him a note, asking him "to change his style, or else his dwelling." Polidori, one of the least pliable of mortals, closed at once with the second alternative, and determined to clear out of France, and repair to England to teach Italian. He asked for and readily obtained three letters of introduction from Alfieri and the Countess of Albany. These were addressed to Mrs. Cosway, the painter, Captain Masseria, a relative of Napoleon, and the famous Corsican General De' Paoli. The last remained up to his death on intimate terms with Polidori, and left him a mourning ring, which I now possess. In 1791 Alfieri, then in France, wished to get Polidori back as his secretary; but the latter declined with thanks, preferring conservative England very much to revolutionary France.

In February 1793 Polidori married Miss Anna Maria Pierce, who had acted as a governess. He taught Italian for a great number of years, retiring in 1836, after having made a fair moderate competence. He then lived for a while wholly in Buckinghamshire—Holmer Green, near Little Missenden, in a house which he had purchased years before for personal and family convenience—but in 1839 he returned to London, Park Village East, Regent's Park. There he died of apoplexy in December 1853, aged eighty-nine.

My anecdote about the wig-maker and the sword is taken from a little narrative which Polidori wrote, as an appendix to one of his privately printed books; for he kept a printing-press in Park Village East, and there he produced, with some aid from practical hands, several volumes of his own works, and a few others. Dante Rossetti's boyish poem *Sir Hugh the Heron*, and Christina's *Verses*, were among these—printed respectively in 1843 and 1847. Another was the poem by Erasmo di Valvasone, *L'Angeleida*; with passages extracted by Polidori from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, presumably founded

more or less upon this Italian poem. The personal narrative above mentioned relates chiefly to Alfieri, and contains several particulars of some interest. I give here a few of the general observations upon him :—

“Curious and strange was the character of that singular man : proud as Milton’s Satan, and more choleric than Homer’s Achilles. He esteemed himself far beyond his real worth, and very few were the poets or men of letters for whom he had any regard. He was proud of his reddish hair, which he always wore studiously curled and tended ; of his fine and speckless apparel, and especially of his uniform as a captain in the Piedmontese Infantry, which he donned for more solemn occasions ; of his pure gold buckles for shoes and breeches, as then worn ; of his handsome English horses, of which, counting together saddle and carriage horses, he had sixteen ; and of his fine and elegant phaëton, which he generally drove four-in-hand, and went in pomp, taking the air in city and high-road. Yet, amid many defects, Count Alfieri had some good qualities : that of paying his debts most punctually, of limiting his outlay so that at the end of the year some money remained over, rather than be indebted for a penny, and of being just, when justice was clear to him. As I never had to dispute with him, in four years that I was in his house, save with the reason on my side, and, whenever we had disputed, he, upon recognizing that he was in the wrong, had confessed it and taken the blame to himself, I esteemed and loved him [various anecdotes had been previously given in the narrative, amply confirming this statement as to disputes between Alfieri and his secretary]. . . . In 1789 began the French Revolution, in which he exulted, and I saw him leap with joy upon the ruins of the Bastille.”

It is matter of notoriety, however, that after a while Alfieri entirely altered his view of French affairs, and became a Gallophobist of prime virulence.

Polidori was a man of good stature and very vigorous build ; his health was strong, and his faculties not seriously impaired by age. He liked almost any occupation—writing, reading, cabinet-work (he produced many pretty boxes, tables, etc., in wood-mosaic, after the Florentine manner),

and miscellaneous country work. He was a man of the most sturdy and independent character, a sworn enemy to pretence and frivolity of all sorts ; for instance, he would not allow any of his daughters to learn dancing. He always remained nominally a Roman-catholic, but without taking any part in religious observances of whatsoever kind. For his son-in-law Rossetti he had a sincere liking, and owned his great superiority to himself as a poet. But the divergence between them was frequently marked in little things : Polidori solid, unbending, somewhat dogged ; Rossetti not any less earnest in essentials, but vivacious, facile, with more grace of manner and feeling, and comparatively mercurial. As a grandfather Polidori was both kind and tolerant, and was looked up to by us with much warmth of regard.

Gaetano Polidori had all the habits and likings of a literary man, and was more decidedly bookish than my father. Like the latter, he was a member of the Academy of the Arcadi, and bore the high-sounding designation of "Fileremo Etrusco." I possess his Arcadian diploma, a curious document. He wrote a large number of things in prose and verse, both published, privately printed, and unprinted. His first work was a poem, *L'Infedeltà Punita* (*Faithlessness Punished*). Among the others are—*Novelle Morali* (*Moral Tales*) ; *Grammaire de la Langue Italienne* ; *A Dictionary* in three volumes, Italian with French and English, French with Italian and English, and English with Italian and French—a very handy little book, and no doubt no small labour to its compiler ; *Translation of all Milton's Poems* ; *Translation of Lucan's Pharsalia*, with a sequel of his own ; *Tragedie e Drammi*. Unprinted is a *Life of Boccaccio*, written in English, which my grandfather knew and spoke well. This MS. I possess ; likewise an Italian *Life of General de' Paoli*, up to his return to Corsica during the French Revolution—a work which, considering Polidori's intimacy with his hero, might be of some worth.

As I have already said, the wife of Gaetano Polidori was Anna Maria Pierce ; and I will now give some few particulars

about the Pierce family, which is, as will be perceived, the only source from which Dante Gabriel Rossetti had any English blood in his veins.

I know nothing of the Pierces beyond Richard Pierce, my great-great-grandfather, who was a schoolmaster in Burlington Gardens, London. He had a son, William, a writing-master, who maintained himself from the age of sixteen onwards, married twice, and had ten children. William Pierce (I referred to this at the beginning of the present Section) was born as far back as 1736; and it would appear that the vocation of a writing-master must in his prime have been far more lucrative than it is at present, for he made a very comfortable competence (the chief source of whatever money there has been in the family since his time), and "kept his carriage." Possibly his first marriage (which seems to have been into a grade somewhat above his own) had to do with this result. He was always represented to me as a curiously well-preserved specimen of "the old school"; formal, precise, upright, rather formidable to a younger generation, yet kind too in his way. Among his grandchildren he had a special predilection for my mother; though like a good British Tory as he was, he thought it "very odd" that, after his daughter Anna Maria had married one foreigner, his grand-daughter Frances should marry another foreigner. It looked like flying in the face of the blessed shades of a Chatham, Wolfe, Nelson, and George III., and truckling to the far from blessed shades of a Voltaire, a Mirabeau, and a Bonaparte, not to speak of the Pope of Rome. Mr. Pierce had in fact a strong feeling against marriages with foreigners, as his favourite sister had made a marriage of this kind which proved very unhappy. He died in 1829, aged ninety-three, shortly before my birth; and after him I was named William. His ten children, other than Mrs. Polidori, shall not concern us here; except to say that one of his sons, Frederick, became a Brigadier-General, and was highly esteemed, I believe, in the Army of India. I will also observe in passing that, through the first wife of William Pierce, Jane Arrow, and a brother and sister of hers,

the present generation of Rossettis are some sort of cousins to that distinguished cleric, the Rev. J. E. Kempe, of St. James's Church, London, and also to the late Mrs. Eliza Anna Bray, whose first husband was a son of the painter Thomas Stothard. She published a *Life of Stothard*, various romances, tales of Devonshire life, an *Autobiography*, and other works. My uncle Henry Polydore once took the pains of drawing out a scanty pedigree of the Pierce and Arrow families; and I find in it, as connected by marriage, the surnames Wrather, Hunter, Maunsell, Le Mésurier, Jump, Lester, Porter, Hutchins, Mose, Kitchener, Austin, Cooper, Sandrock, and Brown (nothing to do with Madox Brown). These surnames—except Wrather, Austin, and Brown—represent nothing to my memory. Of the Austins I have some direct or collateral knowledge. There was a Bishop Austin in the West Indies, and an Austin Governor of Honduras; and in 1887 at San Remo I met a very pleasant young lady, Miss Burrows (now Mrs. Martin), who informed me that she was some connexion of mine—I believe through the Austin family.

As I have said, my great-grandfather, William Pierce, married a Miss Jane Arrow. My own knowledge of the Arrow family is of the scantiest; but I find it mentioned in Mrs. Bray's *Autobiography* that James Arrow, the father of Jane, belonged to an old race, much damaged in the cause of Charles I. He had a small landed estate in Berkshire, and married an Irish lady, Elizabeth Jerdan, "related to the Whartons." She died at the age of ninety-nine!

To return to Anna Maria Pierce, Mrs. Polidori, whom, as she lived on to May 1853, I remember perfectly well. Before my recollection begins she had already become an invalid, owing to an internal complaint, and she never left her bedroom, and not often her bed. Her youngest daughter, Eliza Harriet, was her constant and devoted attendant, sacrificing for this purpose all the pleasures and interests of youth. Mrs. Polidori was a fine old lady, with very correct features, and an air which, in spite of her age and infirmity, was

comely as well as reverend. Her bed-room had to me all the dignity of a presence-chamber, which I entered at sparse intervals with a certain awe. She was, like several others of her race, a high Tory, and an earnest member of the Church of England; and the arrangement made at her marriage was that any daughters should be brought up in that Church, while any sons should belong to the Roman communion. It comes apposite to say here that in the Rossetti family the understanding was different, and all the children were trained in their mother's faith. Mrs. Polidori had attained her eighty-fourth year at the date of her death. The only other member of her generation of the Pierce family whom I knew was her elder sister Harriet, who, though unmarried, was always in my time styled Mrs. Pierce, and we children were admonished to term her "Granny." After passing many years as governess in the family of the Earl of Yarborough, she spent the evening of her life in nice apartments in London, which she made a model of spick-and-span comfort, not unmixed with elegance. I have just now said that she was unmarried; but there ran a rumour, not totally uncorroborated, that Lord Yarborough had in fact wedded her without publicity. He had become a widower in 1813, and lived on to 1846. This rumour I of course in no sort of way avouch. "Granny" was the liberal purveyor of many a serviceable household-present to my mother, her favourite niece. She inherited all the faultless precision and imposing decorum of her father, and was the most nitid little old lady you could easily pick out in London. She died in 1849—the first time that I looked upon the visible face of death.

The Polidoris had a family of four daughters and four sons—one of the latter dying in infancy. In my notes to my brother's letters sufficient details will be given about three of these—Charlotte Lydia, Philip Robert, and Henry Francis (the latter modified his surname into Polydore). There remain the eldest daughter, Maria Margaret, and the youngest (whom I have just now mentioned), Eliza Harriet. Maria

Margaret—or Margaret, as she was always called—was in her youth a governess, but retired pretty early, and lived with her family, and finally in my house, 166 Albany Street, where she died in 1867. She was much affected with nervous tremor, and troubled by hysterical fits, in which she would fall into peals of long-continued quasi-laughter, which rang over the house—more like the vocal gymnastics of a laughing hyena than like anything else I know. No other symptom of the hyena appeared about my aunt, who, apart from a touchy temper, was a good old soul, much addicted to “daily service” twice a day in church. The youngest daughter, Eliza Harriet, had always a housekeeping managing turn, without any literary leanings. In 1854, the year succeeding her mother’s death, she determined to make her knowledge of nursing useful to the nation, and went out with Miss Nightingale to the Crimean expedition, being then about forty-five years of age. To her disappointment no actual nursing was assigned to her, but she had the supervision of the hired nurses, and the management of bedding-stores etc., at the Barrack Hospital, Scutari, and rendered excellent service, which was recognized by the bestowal of a Turkish medal. I remember that after her return to England some case relating to the nursing transactions came into a London police-court, and she had to give evidence; and we were amused at finding her, in the newspaper reports, designated as “Miss Polly Dory.” The Crimean affair was about the only “adventure” of her long life. She died in London in 1893, aged nearly eighty-four. Eliza was the last of the English Polidoris; some of the name are still in Florence.

Only one other Polidori has to be accounted for in my narrative—Dr. John William Polidori, who lives faintly in some memories as the travelling physician of the famous Lord Byron. He was born in London on 7 September 1795, educated at some Catholic schools and at the Benedictine Ampleforth College near York, and took his degree as M.D. in Edinburgh at the singularly youthful age of nineteen. He was only twenty when, on the recommendation of Sir Henry

Halford, he became the travelling physician of Byron, who on 24 April 1816 left England for the last time. They went along the Rhine to Geneva, where Polidori made acquaintance also with Shelley and his two companions, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (the second Mrs. Shelley) and Clare Clairmont. Polidori, who had poetical and literary ambitions of his own, took too much upon him to suit Byron for long; so on 16 September the two parted company, and the young Doctor travelled on alone to Pisa, and then returned to England. He became one of the physicians in the Norwich Hospital; but soon gave up medicine, partly because he would not have been allowed to practise in London before completing twenty-six years of age, and he began studying in London for the Bar. It has been said that in Norwich Miss Harriet Martineau was somewhat in love with him; and this would not be unlikely, as Polidori—apart from his intellectual gifts, which were by no means so flimsy as some people seem now to suppose—was a noticeably fine young man, of striking feature and presence. In August 1821 the end came in a melancholy way: he committed suicide with poison—having, through losses in gambling, incurred a debt of honour which he had no present means of clearing off. A coroner's jury was summoned; the jurors took, probably through good-nature towards the family, no steps for eliciting requisite evidence, and returned a verdict of "Died by the visitation of God." His death was a grievous blow to his father, all whose leading hopes centred in this son. Gaetano Polidori, to the end of his long life, a lapse of thirty-two years, was never equal to hearing any mention of him, and we children of a younger generation were strictly warned not to name him, however casually, in our grandfather's presence.

John Polidori published two volumes of verse: *Ximenes, a Tragedy, and Other Poems*, 1819; and *The Fall of the Angels*, 1821. It may at once be admitted that his poetry was not good. Two prose tales are much better—*Ernestus Berchtold*, and *The Vampyre*, both published in 1819. *The Vampyre* has continually been misascribed to Byron,

who in reality wrote the mere beginning of another tale (quite different in its incidents) named likewise *The Vampyre*. Polidori left some other writings, both published and unpublished. The latter include a diary, partly detailed and partly mere jottings, of his sojourn with Byron and Shelley, and his subsequent tour. It was commissioned by Murray for publication at no less a price than £525, and contains some particulars of substantial interest.<sup>1</sup>

I have now finished all that I need say about the relatives of Dante Rossetti on the mother's side. The only relative on our father's side whom we have personally known—with some others I have corresponded—was Teodorico (or properly Teodoro) Pietrocola, who adopted the compound surname of Pietrocola-Rossetti. He was a Vastese, and studied medicine to some extent. In 1851, being then about twenty-four years of age, he came to London, hoping to find an opening of some kind ; but found nothing except semi-starvation, which he bore with a cheerful constancy touching to witness. In 1856 or thereabouts he returned to Italy, practised for a moderate while medicine as a Homœopathist, married a Scotch lady (originally Miss Steele, now Mrs. Cole, an amiable, accomplished, and admirable woman), and, with her co-operation, devoted himself to preaching evangelical Christianity, somewhat of the Vaudois type, in Florence and elsewhere. He died very suddenly in 1883, just as he was giving out a hymn or text to his small congregation. He published a few things—among others, a biography of my father, a translation of *Alice in Wonderland*, and one of Christina Rossetti's poem, *Goblin-Market*. A man of more native unselfish kindness, of stricter morals, or of nicer conscientiousness, never breathed.

Since writing the above, I have observed in the book of Mr. W. G. Collingwood, *The Life and Work of John Ruskin*, a reference to Pietrocola-Rossetti which is of so much interest

<sup>1</sup> On the details about Shelley in this diary I wrote a few years ago, and delivered to the Shelley Society, a lecture which has not as yet been printed.

to me, and in itself so noticeable, that I extract it here ; it relates to the year 1882 :—

“Miss [Francesca] Alexander . . . was as friendly, not only in society but in spiritual things, with the worthy village priest as with T. P. Rossetti, the leader of the Protestant ‘Brethren,’ whom she called her pastor—a cousin of the artist, and in his way no less remarkable a man. It is hardly too much to say that he did, for evangelical religion in Italy, what Gabriel Rossetti did for poetical art in England : he showed the path to sincerity and simplicity. And Mr. Ruskin, who had been driven away from Protestantism by the Waldensian at Turin [this refers to an incident in the year 1858], and had wandered through many realms of doubt, and voyaged through strange seas of thought alone, found harbour at last with the disciple of a modern evangelist, the frequenter of the poor little meeting-house of outcast Italian Protestants.”

If this statement is literally accurate, it would appear that the latest development of Mr. Ruskin’s religious opinions was mainly influenced by Miss Alexander, who was not a little influenced by Pietrocola-Rossetti : a matter worth remembering for many a day to come.

I have often reflected how utterly different this cousin of mine was from the ordinary English notion of a Southern Italian. My father also was very different from that notion ; my grandfather, a Central Italian, quite the reverse of it. Peace be with the honoured and honourable memory of all three.

The Rossetti family in Vasto became extinct while I was composing this Memoir : the latest survivor was Vincenzo Rossetti, who died, aged forty, on 11 November 1894. “With him,” so runs a *billet de faire part* which was sent to me, “was lost the last germ of so glorious a stem in Italy.” I presume, but cannot say for certain, that in the female line the race of Nicola and Maria Francesca Rossetti may still subsist.

The reader may have observed, in the course of my family narrative, several instances of longevity in the races of Arrow, Pierce, and Polidori. I have under my eye a list

of nine persons, among whom the lowest age was eighty-three, the highest ninety-nine—average eighty-eight. Nothing of the sort appears in the Rossetti race, though my father attained a not inconsiderable age—seventy-one. It may also be noted that in the three lines from which Dante Rossetti came—Polidori, Pierce, and Rossetti—the work of tuition held a very large place. Hence perchance he inherited a certain readiness at linguistics, and at seeing literary matters from a literary point of view ; but there was little or nothing in him of the man born to teach by ordinary teaching methods.

#### IV.

##### *CHILDHOOD.*

My mother, marrying on 10 April 1826, had four children—there were never any more—in four successive years : Maria Francesca, born on 17 February 1827 ; Gabriel Charles Dante, 12 May 1828 ; William Michael, 25 September 1829 ; and Christina Georgina, 5 December 1830. The famous Surgeon and Physician, Dr. Locock—afterwards Sir William Locock, the Queen's accoucheur—ushered, I believe, all of us into the world ; for our father—though a man of thrift, and in personal expenses heedfully sparing—grudged no cost needed for the well-being of his household. To Gabriel Charles Dante I shall here generally apply the name "Dante," which he adopted as if it had stood first in order ; in his own family, however, he was invariably termed Gabriel—or, by our sister Maria, "Gubby," a pet name which other members of the household did not affect.

Our house, No. 38 Charlotte Street, was a fairly neat but decidedly small one : it is smaller inside than it looks viewed from outside. I can remember a little about it, but not much. Towards 1836 the family had outgrown it, and removed to No. 50 in the same street—a larger but still far indeed from being a spacious dwelling. This house is now the office of a Registrar of births, deaths, and marriages ; and, singularly

enough, when I had to record in 1876 the death of my sister Maria, I found that the place for doing this was the very house in which she had so long resided. Soon after Gabriele Rossetti settled in Charlotte Street it began to go down in character, and at times it became the extreme reverse of "respectable." Dante Rossetti in his early childhood was a pleasing spirited-looking boy, with bright eyes, auburn hair, and fresh complexion. He remembered in after-years nothing distinctly earlier than this: That there used to be a Punch and Judy show which came at frequent intervals to perform just before our house, but for the delectation of our opposite neighbours, so that he himself only saw the back of the show. This was not at all what he wanted; so he motioned to go out into the street, and turn round and see the front of the Punch and Judy (there was no Dog Toby in those distant days), but was woefully disconcerted at being told that such a proceeding would be *infra dig*, and not to be condoned. Dante shared with Maria the ascendancy over his two juniors: but Maria, in these opening years, was not easily to be superseded—being of a very enthusiastic temperament and lively parts; and indeed she always remained the best of the four at what we call acquired knowledge. In her fifth year she could read anything in either English or Italian, and read she did with tireless persistency. Our early years were passed wholly at home in London, with occasional visits to our grandparents at Holmer Green, our Aunts Margaret and Eliza, and our Uncle Philip, being continuously there as well. Our daily walks were with our mother in and about Regent's Park, which was opened to the public much towards the date of my birth. I can still recollect how palatial I used to consider the frontage of the Terraces facing the Park, and how our mother would explain to us which of the columns or pilasters was Ionic, which Corinthian, and so on. The Colosseum, a big Exhibition building pulled down towards 1870, was then in existence, and was occasionally visited by us. It comprised a Camera Obscura, in which we viewed with wonder the groups of people disporting them-

selves in the Park. Primrose Hill was ascended every now and then. It led immediately on into fields (how different from now!) which brought one into the rural village of Hampstead, to which our father escorted us at rare intervals. Railways were just beginning not far from Regent's Park; to see the puffs of their steam as the trains rolled onward appeared little short of magic.

Two of my childish reminiscences of my brother relate to animals. Some one gave him a dormouse, which he named "Dwanging," and, on the approach of winter, he shut it up in a drawer to hibernate. In its long sleep he looked at it from time to time, but was careful not to disturb it; and his glee was proportionate when the little creature revived in the spring. Later on there was a hedgehog, to whom Dante's conduct was not equally correct. The hedgehog was wont to trot about on the table in our dining and sitting room, or "parlour" as we mostly termed it (the drawing-room was little used, save by our father in his literary work, or occasionally with a pupil); and one day my brother insisted on leaving upon the table some beer for his prickly favourite. The latter freely partook of the beverage, and his unsteady gait evinced the effects of it. Our mother forbade the repetition of any such experiments; and I think Dante himself had no wish to recur to them, for at no period of his life did he relish the sight of anything repellent or degrading. One of my brother's first books was *Peter Parley's Natural History*, which he enjoyed, both text and cuts. We went pretty often to the Zoological Gardens, then a very recent foundation, and would run shrieking through its tunnel, to rouse the echo. The animals were at that date much fewer than now, yet still numerous—their housing very inferior. There was a striated monkey, whose designation was explained to us (I have not seen any such animal of late years); also a singsing antelope, of whom my father would say (in English), "Sing, sing, antelope; antelope, sing, sing; but he never sang." Armadilloes, and a sloth walking with his head downwards, were among our favourites—not to speak of screaming parrots,

bears, lions, tigers, and elephants. A collared peccary gave Christina a vicious bite, which came to nothing. No wombat figured at that early date; but several dogs used to be there, more or less domestic, which were tethered in a rather dejected and yell-abounding file. They were afterwards abolished, on the ground that such a treatment of them was not far remote from cruelty.

Another amusement, as Dante progressed in childhood, was the Adelaide Gallery, close to St. Martin's Church, now occupied by Gatti's Restaurant. It was a semi-scientific entertainment, exhibiting *inter alia* fearsome microscopic enlargements of the infusoria in a few drops of water. The Adelaide Gallery was succeeded by the Polytechnic Institution in Regent Street, with a more varied programme of like kind—diving-bell, electric shocks, dissolving views, chemical demonstrations, etc. This also is now gone, the present Polytechnic being quite a different sort of establishment. The Soho Bazaar, and more especially the Pantheon Bazaar in Oxford Street (now Gilbey's liquor stores), were often our resort. The Pantheon exhibited many pictures from time to time, including Haydon's *Raising of Lazarus*. Astley's Riding Circus, with dramatic entertainments (such as *Mazeppa*), we saw once or twice, but in childhood we hardly at all entered a regular theatre. To pay for going to the Italian Opera (the building near Charing Cross, now gone) was what we could not afford. Occasionally, however, the great singer Lablache, whom my father had known in Naples, would give us a ticket for that house, and we enjoyed the performance vastly. My recollections carry me back to the first (or may-be the second) London season of the celebrated Madame Julia Grisi, whom I saw in the *Gazza Ladra*. The appearance of her husband Mario was a matter of some years later on. I remember also the first season of Madlle Rachel, who was acting Chimène in the *Cid* of Corneille. There was likewise a ballet, *The Daughter of the Danube*, with various "fiends" in it. This hit our fancy uncommonly, and we made at home some kind of pretence at "the Blue Demon"

and other of its characters in 1838. My first (and for years it must have remained my sole) pantomime is also a lively reminiscence. There was a race run by jockeys on pigs, and each touch of the whip raised a shower of sparks out of the porcine steeds, to my uncontrollable laughter and delight. My brother must have been with me, but I forget his demeanour.

Beyond an opera or a concert at rare intervals, we heard little music as children ; except that our father, with his rich voice and fine declamation, would at times, unaccompanied, strike up a stave of some glorious chant of the French revolutionary epoch—

“La Victoire en chantant nous ouvre la barrière”—

or (sung to the same spirit-stirring air)—

“Romain, lève les yeux. Là fut le Capitol,”<sup>1</sup>

or the Marseillaise. Another customary song of his was a popular and rather long grotesque tirade about a Jewish wedding, *Baruccabà*, from which he sang several snatches. Our mother also would frequently play on the pianoforte, for our delectation, *The Battle of Prague*, with the “groans of the wounded,” and other less lugubrious details. She had an agreeable voice for singing ; but it had received no sort of cultivation, as singing was, like dancing, one of the worldly vanities which my grandfather discountenanced. In my first

<sup>1</sup> This Lyric must belong to the year 1798, when the French army entered Rome, and set up a short-lived Republic ; perhaps it is now a curiosity. I can recall the opening lines—being all, I think, that my father sang :—

“Romain, lève les yeux. Là fut le Capitol :  
Ce pont fut le pont de Coclès :  
La Brutus immola sa race :  
Et César dans cette autre place  
Fut poignardé par Cassius.  
Rome, la Liberté t'appelle ;  
Sache vaincre ou sache périr :  
Un Romain doit vivre pour elle,  
Pour elle un Romain doit mourir.”

years I often heard her sing these lines, and the tune still lingers with me :—

“The sun sets by night and the stars shun the day,  
But glory remains when their lights fade away :  
Begin, ye tormentors, your threats are in vain,  
For the sons of Alnomuk shall never complain.

“Remember the arrows we shot from our bow,  
Remember the chiefs by our hatchets laid low :  
Now, the flames rising fast, we exult in our pain,  
For the sons of Alnomuk shall never complain.”

Where do these mediocre lines come from? My mother (it seems to me) associated them with the story of Guatimozin and the Spaniards under Cortes, but that does not look correct.

I hardly think that I ever saw my father touch a pack of playing cards; he played pretty often at chess. My mother would at times take part in a family game without any stakes. Upon us children nothing was more strongly impressed than a horror of gambling, which had led to the death of Dr. John Polidori: but we were allowed to play at simple games; Patience, and Beggar my Neighbour, and (what I never hear of now) The Duchess of Rutland's Whim. The last I associated in my mind with the notion of arithmetical subtraction, as contrasted with addition, which the other two games might be held to represent. Later on there came Whist, and the Italian game of *Tre Sette*. We identified ourselves in a sort of way with the four suits of cards; and clubs were thus made the appurtenance of Maria, hearts of Dante, diamonds of Christina, and spades of myself. I may here say that the dislike to the idea of gambling clung to us through life; and neither Dante nor any other of us ever played for money, in any sense worth naming. Besides cards, a rocking-horse, a spinning-top, a teetotum, ball, ninepins, blindman's buff, and puss-in-the-corner, used to amuse us—hardly anything else in the way of games. Even marbles we never rightly learned, nor efficient kite-flying, still less anything to be called athletics. As to mental games, we were much addicted to what is called

“animal, vegetable, or mineral”; and there must occasionally have been some “capping verses,” but this (which seems odd under the circumstances) was quite infrequent.

Of events in the opening years of Dante Rossetti I find none to record; unless it be that, at the age of five, he suddenly became weak on his legs, and, after the celebrated surgeon Sir Benjamin Brodie had been consulted, he had to wear splints for a longish while—say three or four months. I can recollect the look of him, carried, or afterwards hobbling, upstairs. One day he thought he would try how he could do without the splints; he did very well, and the affair was at an end. He was a sprightly little fellow, and liked to play a trick or two. One trick he played more than once was walking in the street in a huddled-up attitude, as if he were crippled or almost hunchbacked. When a passenger looked at him sympathetically, the limbs suddenly straightened, and perhaps an impish laugh accompanied the change of form. In our unluxurious household he was regarded as rather “dainty” in his diet; inclined to eat such things as he liked, and doing without those he disliked. For beer he had a marked distaste; there was no wine going to speak of, so he stuck to water. Meat also he would scarcely touch until turned of eight years.

I believe the first attempt at drawing made by the future painter of *Beata Beatrix* was on this wise. At the age of about four he stationed himself in the passage leading to the street-door, and with a pencil of our father's began drawing his rocking-horse; later on in his childhood and boyhood he seldom made any attempt at drawing from any real object, but only “out of his own head.” A milkman came in at the moment, and was not a little surprised: “I saw a baby making a picture,” he said to the servant. I have here mentioned “the age of about four,” because that is the age which my brother himself named to me one day in April 1872 when we were talking over our earliest reminiscences. I still possess a drawing by him of the rocking-horse, on which our mother has marked the date 1834, when he was at least five

years of age. I could believe this to be that very first drawing of all, were it not that the performance comes so near to being pretty tolerably good that I find some difficulty in conceiving that he had never before taken pencil in hand.

Having once begun, Dante never dropped this notion of drawing—of handling a pencil or a brush; and I cannot remember any date at which it was not understood in the family that “Gabriel meant to be a painter.” He, and also I, were incessantly buying sheets of slight engravings of actors and actresses in costume—“Skelt’s Theatrical Characters” was the name of one leading series of them. I do not think any such engravings are now produced, which seems strange in this period of dramatic activity. There was a good-natured little stationer named Hardy, perhaps in Clipstone Street, from whom we bought these things; and another named Marks, in Great Titchfield Street, who was a trifle less accommodating, and on one occasion nonplussed us both by insisting that we should ask for the required “characters” by the number printed on the sheet, and not by the title of the play or the personage. The quantity of these figures which Dante and I coloured is marvellous to reflect upon—he in chief, but I was a good second; our sisters counted for little. We also “tinselled” the figures, but this was comparatively rare. Now and then we made some attempt at acting a play with such personages on a toy-stage; but, as none of us had the least manual or mechanical dexterity, this came to nothing. I seem to recollect *The Miller and his Men* and *Der Freischütz*. In colouring our taste was all for bright hues—red, blue, yellow, etc. Neither of us had the least of a colourist’s sympathy for fused, subdued, or mottled tints.

In those days another amusement was current, which has, I fancy, died out entirely. It might well be revived. “Magic Shadows” was the name of it. One bought full-sized sheets of paper, on which heads, figures, or groups, were rudely printed, in coarse outline, and with numerous half-formless splotches

of black. One had to cut out a figure etc. along its outline, and to cut out also the splotches of black ; and then one held up the figure between a candle and the wall, so that the shadow of the unexcised portions was cast on to the wall. This shadow looked surprisingly neat and expressive in comparison with the original aspect of the printed figures. We all—but principally myself—enjoyed this ocular amusement, and practised it diligently for various years.

## V.

*ACQUAINTANCES IN CHILDHOOD.*

MR. HALL CAINE has cited from one of Dante Rossetti's letters the phrase, "Our household was all of Italian, not English, environment." This is wholly correct.

The only English family that we used to see pretty frequently was that of Mr. Cipriani Potter, the Pianist, and Principal of the Royal Academy of Music. He was one of my godfathers, and had children of much the same age as ourselves ; an excellent undersized man, with a somewhat saturnine expressive face, an abundance of shrewd sense, and a bantering habit of talk. Mr. Charles Lyell, though intimate with my father, was seldom in London. There was also Mr. Thomas Keightley, the historian, and author of *The Fairy Mythology*—a book which formed one of the leading delights of our childhood. He likewise was in London only occasionally—a scholarly, shortsighted Irishman, of a high sense of honour, rather easily nettled now and again. He was a great believer in my father's views concerning Dante. At a much later date, towards 1849, Mr. Keightley settled in a suburb of London ; and his nephew and adopted son, Mr. Alfred Chaworth Lyster, became, and still remains, one of my most affectionate friends. Two of the families in which my father taught Italian—those of Mr. Swynfen Jervis, and of Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid—had a particular regard for him, and on some high occasions we children were inside their

doors. Mr. Jervis, a relative of Lord St. Vincent, took some minor part in verse-writing and Shakespearean comment. He was father of Mrs. George Henry Lewes, and I remember her well before her marriage, but never saw her afterwards ; her unfortunate story shall not here be touched upon. To Sir Isaac Goldsmid, one of the wealthiest Hebrew stockbrokers in London, I may record my obligation, which proved to be a life-long one. He it was who, when my father, in failing health and waning employment, was looking out for some career into which I could be introduced, spoke a word in season to one of his colleagues on the Council of the London University, Mr. John Wood, then Chairman of the Board of Excise—and Mr. Wood lost no time in giving me employment there which, though temporary at first starting, lasted in fact from February 1845 to August 1894. These seem to be about the only English people whom I need mention in this connexion, allowing besides for the English family of an Anglo-Italian music-master, Signor Rovedino. This family, like that of Mr. Potter, comprised children of our own age. With Mrs. Rovedino resided an aunt, whom I mention for the sake of her sounding old Saxon name, Miss Waltheof, which was always pronounced Walthew.

We knew in childhood a perfect specimen of the "Poor Relation," who used to call upon our mother at regular intervals for purposes easily surmisable. She was named Miss Sarah Brown—a middle-aged spinster tending to the elderly, of that order of faculty which is termed "weak-minded." At a very early age we became, in some casual way, familiar with Charles Lamb's excellent little essay called *Poor Relations*, containing the words (as near as I remember them) :—

"There is one person more embarrassing than a male Poor Relation, and that is a female Poor Relation ; no woman dresses below her station from caprice."

I used to ponder these words in regard to Sarah Brown, and to think, "Is it or is it not true that no woman dresses below her station from caprice ?"

If English acquaintances were at a minimum with us, Italian acquaintances were at a maximum. It seems hardly an exaggeration to say that every Italian staying in or passing through London, of a Liberal mode of political opinion, sought out my father, to make or renew acquaintance with him ; not to speak of numerous relays of tatterdemalions, who came principally or solely for alms. If they made the Masonic knock at the door, or a Masonic digital sign on entering, they were immediately relieved, as an act of obligation on the part of my father as a Freemason ; and many were relieved who had no claim of that particular kind. There were two terms which I have heard my father apply—how often !—to persons of this class : “ *un cercatore* ” was an applicant or beggar, “ *un seccatore* ” was an intrusive person, or bore. Others, to whom these designations did not relate (though some of these also were manifest *seccatori*, and perhaps on occasion *cercatori* as well), would come evening after evening, and almost all evenings, to our house—in various instances, for months or years together. My father, as the offspring of a blacksmith in a country town, was not entitled to have any caste-prejudices, and in fact he had none. To be an Italian was a passport to his good-will ; and, whether the Italian was a nobleman, a professional gentleman, a small musical hanger-on, a macaroni-man, or a mere waif and stray churned by the pitiless sea of expatriation, he equally welcomed him, if only he were an honest soul, and not a *spia* (spy)—the latter being a class of men much rumoured of among the Italian refugees and Londoners, and abhorred with a loathing indignation. Hardly an organ-man or plaster-cast vendor passed our street-door without being interrogated by my father, “ *Di che paese siete ?* ” (“ What part of Italy do you come from ? ”) The plaster-cast vendor is seen no more in London streets, but the organ-man remains. The natives of the Sunny South who frequented our house seemed all to be indifferent—singularly indifferent, in British eyes—to any form of social entertainment ; what they came for was talk—chiefly on political topics, mingled at moments with a little literature,

and constantly with a liberal sprinkling of my father's poems, which were received with sonorous eulogy, founded at least as much on political or national as on literary considerations. Gabriele Rossetti's noble declamation, taken along with his subject-matter, was indeed enough to carry any sympathizer away on the wave and whirl of excitement. I seldom heard him read any of his prose-writings on such occasions. His auditors hardly appeared to have any fleshly appetites. Such a thing as a solid supper was never in question, neither did they ever propose to smoke. They would come into our small sitting-room, greet the "Signora Francesca" and their host, and sit down, as the chance offered, amid the whole family, adult and semi-infantine. A cup or two of tea or of coffee, with a slice of bread and butter, was all the provender wont to be forthcoming.

It would be difficult to give an idea of the atmosphere of thought and feeling in which Dante Rossetti grew to boyhood and to youth, unless I were to say something about the foreign visitors. I shall endeavour to be reasonably brief. Some he remembered a little, but I, his junior, scarcely or not at all. Such were Angeloni, a literary purist,<sup>1</sup> who became blind in his last years; General Michele Carrascosa, who was my second godfather; the famous *prima donna* Giuditta Pasta; Guido Sorelli, who maligned in a book the character of Italian women, and was gibbeted by my father in a sonnet; Dragonetti, a leading violoncellist at the Italian opera; Petroni, compiler of a dictionary. The celebrated author Ugo Foscolo was barely known to my father in London; well known was the not less celebrated violinist Paganini. There was a Conte Farò, who took, I believe, to coal-dealing. "Farò" means in Italian "I will do"; and my father (possibly

<sup>1</sup> Purism in the use of the Italian language was a great controversy among Italians in all those years. The purists insisted upon recurring to the standard of literary diction, mainly the Tuscan of the fourteenth century, to the exclusion of everything modern, provincial, or imported from abroad. Gabriele Rossetti cared little for such niceties, but was willing to write much as he thought and spoke. Polidori was stricter, yet not a purist.

without any reason beyond the purport of the name) used to call him "*Farò, farò, e non farà mai niente*" ("I will do, I will do, and never will he do anything"). One curious character, fearfully addicted to drawing the long bow, was named the Marchese Moscati, who actually persuaded the very eminent physician, Dr. Elliotson, that Moscati had a double stomach, and was a ruminating animal. Elliotson introduced him to Rossetti, and was (I may take this opportunity of saying) our accustomed family doctor, resolutely refusing—for he was a most kind and generous man—to accept any fees for his valuable advice. Thackeray dedicated *Pendennis* to him. After a while my father left Moscati to ruminate by himself, and they became avowed enemies.

Among Italians well remembered by me, some are mentioned in my Notes to Dante Rossetti's letters:—Filippo Pistrucci (I recollect also, though faintly, his brother Benedetto the eminent medallist, who designed our "George-and-the-Dragon" coinage); Sangiovanni, the clever modeller in clay, the most picturesque figure of all, who had, I believe, "knifed" somebody in early youth, and had later on (chiefly after the suppression of the Neapolitan constitution in 1821) had many a romantic adventure in the kingdom, as captain of a band for the suppression of brigandage, which bore a partly politico-reactionary character; the Cavalier Mortara; Baron Calfapietra. Other intimates in our early childhood were—Janer (he subsequently called himself Janer-Nardini), a Tuscan, scholarly and courteous, keen in politics, and of a very biting tongue; Cicioni, a teacher of Italian, of high character in all respects, who took up Rossetti's work at some times when the latter was laid aside, and especially during his very severe illness in 1843; Foresti, who had been in China; Sarti, the plaster-cast vendor; De' Marsi, a teacher; Ferrari, an aged musician whom blindness had overtaken; Sir Michael Costa, the musician and conductor, and his brother Raffaele, both of whom we saw occasionally; Count Carlo Pepoli, a good-looking, cultivated Bolognese of high honour and ancient family, regarded in our retired household as rather a dandy—he had been addressed in a

striking poetical epistle by the great poet Leopardi, and eventually an English lady of some fortune "proposed to him," and he married her, returned to Italy when liberal politics prevailed there, and died a Senator of the realm; Rolandi, the bookseller, a very worthy man of small stature; Count Giuseppe Ricciardi, a South Neapolitan, an ardent patriot of the revolutionary-republican type. I remember seeing once or twice in our house a handsome stately lady, rather advanced in years, who called herself, I think, Ida Saint Elme. She was the daughter of a Hungarian nobleman, Leopold de Tolstoy, had led an agitated and far from correct life, and was authoress of the *Mémoires d'une Contemporaine*, published in Paris in 1827. Two old friends passed some days in my father's house, vaguely remembered by me—Dr. Curci, and Smargiassi, the latter a Vastese, and a landscape-painter of considerable name in the Neapolitan kingdom. Curci had quite a passionate attachment to my father, and I believe visited England for the express purpose of seeing him once again. Later on were Cornaro, a descendant (and I think I was told the sole remaining descendant) of the great Venetian family—a noticeable man, in early middle age, with long nose and reddish hair—he was said to be an inveterate gambler, and he died accidentally by drowning; Parodi, a dancing-master, who gave us lessons in dancing, in return for Italian lessons imparted to his son by my father—he was a man not wanting in good sense, but uninstructed in a marked degree, and spoke the most curious lingo that I ever heard—French, German, and English, grafted on to his native Italian; Aspa, a vigorous Sicilian, pianoforte-tuner in Broadwood's house; Gallenga, the political and miscellaneous writer, as expert in the English as in the Italian tongue; Dr. Maroncelli, brother of a well-known exile who suffered a rigid imprisonment; the musician Sperati; Signora Monti (afterwards Monti-Baraldi), to whom some of Rossetti's latest letters were written. Dr. Maroncelli gave him some medical advice towards 1843; and later on another doctor, Gilioli, seemed to have some partial success in treating his eyesight.

Of one of these Italians, Sangiovanni, I will say a few words further, as he and his had more to do with our early family life than any of the others; Pistrucci came next. Sangiovanni was a tall gaunt man, with an air of having gone through a deal of wearing work, aged about fifty-two when I first remember him. It is rather a curious fact that two Spanish painters, having to depict St. Joseph, adopted a type of visage not at all unlike Sangiovanni's, but in each instance (especially the second) less strained and rugged. I refer to the pictures in our National Gallery, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, by Velasquez, and *The Holy Family*, by Murillo. Of school knowledge Sangiovanni had little, but plenty of intelligence; of religious belief (I should say) nothing; but in this respect he was on a par with a large proportion of his London compatriots. My father once narrated to him the story of the Patriarch Joseph, from the Book of Genesis, which came perfectly new to him, and interested him extremely. In 1833 he went over to America, on business proper to Achille Murat, to look after an estate and its slave-labourers. In the United States he saw an Anglo-American young woman whom he liked; he proposed for her, and brought her back to England as his wife. She became the mother of an ailing boy, Guglielmo. Sangiovanni, as a husband, was not unkind in his way, but had all the jealousy (perfectly gratuitous in this instance) and the dominance of a Southern Italian; and his wife was almost a prisoner in her dingy tenement, Nassau Street, Marylebone, where her spouse carried on his clay-modelling art. My mother, with some of us children, often looked in upon her solitude, and held her in deserved esteem. After some years she came to understand (I know not how) that Sangiovanni was already a married man, having a wife still living in Italy. This was, I suppose, true; and not less true that Sangiovanni had heard nothing of his first wife for many years, and had genuinely believed her to be no more. About the same time our Mrs. Sangiovanni got to know something about the Mormons; so one day she vanished with her son to Mormon-

land, and was never again traced. This may have been in 1846. Sangiovanni, after much agitated inquiry, resumed his ordinary work, and he died at Brighton in 1853.

Other names and reminiscences crowd upon me as I write. There was an odd personage, Albera, whom we considered not entirely sane. He was a great believer in one of the professing Dauphins of France, Louis XVII.—I think this one was the so-called Naundorf—and he insisted upon taking my father to see him, and believe in him too. My father saw him, but did not believe in him; though he allowed that Naundorf looked very like a Bourbon,<sup>1</sup> and had a daughter resembling Marie Antoinette. After a while Naundorf took to a sort of religious revelation, as well as to Gallic royalty, and my father, regarding him as a decided impostor, visited him no more. Then came a little snuffy senile Frenchman, the Comte de Neubourg, who was, I suppose, a Legitimist or Carlist. If his linen was not spotless, his manners were exquisitely polite. He had a mania for puns; and, when my father was conversing on some subject with his usual energetic zest, the Comte would at times both embarrass and exasperate him by interjecting something which, on reflection, proved to have no *raison d'être* beyond punning. Another singular person was the "Babylonish Princess" (introduced into our house by Cavalier Mortara), "Maria Theresa Asmar, daughter of Emir Abdallah Asmar," who published her Memoirs in two volumes in 1844. She was a small, very dark woman, of middle age and subdued manners, and decidedly plain. A Vastese named Rulli appeared in our house towards 1842, and made some pretence at bringing Dante Rossetti on in his artistic studies. I believe his instruction was limited to propounding to the youth, for copying, a drawing or engraving of an architectonic ram's

<sup>1</sup> This question of Naundorf, or of other persons who claimed to be Louis XVII., has of late acquired added importance, as it seems to be established, by the investigation ordered by the French Government, that the remains which were produced and medically inspected in 1795 as being those of the deceased Louis XVII., cannot really have been his.

head. Rulli appeared to us an unmeaning and not easily intelligible sort of character; he had something in him, however, for he died in a battle for Italian liberation. An Avvocato Teodorani adopted, and even wrote or lectured on, some of Rossetti's ideas concerning Dante and other Italian poets; and a cultivated gentleman, De' Filippi, saw a good deal of his closing years. A native of the Kingdom of Naples was generally to be known (apart from dialect or physiognomy) by his addressing my father as "Don Gabriele"—for that mode still subsists from the old days of the Spanish occupation. To other Italians my father was "Signor Rossetti," or (if on a formal footing, which was not wont to last long) "Signor Professore."

The determined character of some of these men may be illustrated by a passage from a letter written by Gabriele Rossetti in April 1851. I can hardly have failed to see the Galanti here mentioned, but I do not remember his person.

"Hither had fled from Naples, after the infamous treason of 15 May 1848, a man of great talent, the Avvocato Giacinto Galanti, who piqued himself on a spirit of prophecy. At that time our national affairs were flourishing; but he foresaw disasters which, since then, have come but too true. One evening he called to read me a writing of his entitled *The Three Years*, 1848 (it was just in June of that year), 1849, and 1850. The first of these three years he defined as a Year of Roses and Thorns (and you will take note that the thorns had not yet begun); the second, Year all Thorns; and the third, Year of Death. And such, haplessly, they all turned out. He arraigned the Roman Poppedom as the principal cause of all the reverses which he foresaw; and Pius IX. was, at that date, still enacting the comedy which he afterwards turned into a tragedy. On hearing that writing I was staggered; and yet, not being able then to give credence to it, I smiled incredulously, and, shaking my head, I called Galanti a bird of ill omen and a visionary. He rose incensed, and exclaimed: 'You will see whether I speak the truth, and you will confess it; but not to me, for I will not await the direful time that is coming upon us.' Saying this, he departed, returned to his house, not far from mine, and cut his throat. This terrible event produced the deepest impression on me; and soon

afterwards began our disasters. The days of Novara, Verona, and Mantua, ensued ; and then the flight of the Impius who is called Pius, and so to the roses succeeded the thorns. Of the other two years I do not speak ; you know what *they* were."

Towards the close of my father's life various protestantizing Italians, most of them ex-Catholic priests, got about him, and worked the anti-papal side of his opinions and writings. They started a review called the *Eco di Savonarola*. We did not relish them much, though we thought Crespi and Di Menna (the latter a very feeble-minded personage) honest in their views. There were also Ferretti and Mapei—the last little to our taste. I cannot recollect that we ever saw Gavazzi, the admired pulpit orator, but we certainly did see Dr. Achilli—whose character came much bespattered out of his action against Cardinal Newman for libel—a heavy beetle-browed man, who looked fit for most things evil.

I have not yet named the two foremost London-dwelling Italians of my boyhood, Mazzini and Panizzi. That great man, Mazzini, was naturally well known to my father, and highly esteemed by him—a feeling which Mazzini reciprocated. They dissented however, to some extent, as to what should be regarded as practical aims to work for, and practical means of working. Mazzini was, of course, for a republic, and for any number of revolutionary attempts, even though manifestly destined to present failure ; whereas Rossetti was fundamentally for a unified constitutional monarchy, and for a plan of action which would preserve rather than sacrifice valuable lives. Mazzini was perhaps, of the two, the more nearly in the right ; for it seems as if the result would not, without his ceaseless incitements, have been attained nearly so soon as it was. I do not think that I ever set eyes on Mazzini in my father's house ; but I well remember seeing him, towards 1842, at a meeting attended by a number of poor Italians, organ-grinders and others, for whom a school was being started. He spoke after my father ; and the noble, simple utterance of the word with which he began his address—"Fratelli"—still sounds upon my ear. As to Panizzi, my

father knew him likewise in the early years ; but he understood (I believe correctly) that Panizzi was the writer of an adverse and partly sneering critique on his theories concerning Dante and other writers ; this he resented, and they met no more. Garibaldi and Saffi, who came into fame when my father was declining and withdrawn from society, he never saw ; nor do I think he saw the patriot-assassin Felice Orsini, nor Rufini, author of the admired tale *Doctor Antonio*. General Guglielmo Pepe he had known very intimately in Naples, and they kept up some correspondence to a late date, when Pepe was acting as one of the heroic defenders of Venice, 1848-49 ; but the General, so far as I am aware, never came to England.

The *bête noire* of the political Italians whom we so constantly saw was the King of the French, Louis Philippe, or Luigi Filippo, as they called him. He was more abhorred, because more powerful for good or for evil, than even the Pope, the King of Naples, or the pettier tyrants of Italy. Of course too he was regarded as a traitor, having come to the throne by a popular revolution, and then reinforced the cause of retrogression and coercion. There were also the Austrians—"Gli Austriaci"—and their hell-hound Metternich. The number of times I have heard Luigi Filippo denounced would tax the resources of the Calculating Boy. My mind's eye presents a curious group, though it seemed natural enough at the time. My father and three or four foreigners engaged in animated talk on the affairs of Europe, from the point of view of patriotic aspiration, and hope long deferred till it became almost hopeless, with frequent and fervent recitations of poetry intervening ; my mother quiet but interested, and sometimes taking her mild womanly part in the conversation ; and we four children—Maria more especially, with her dark Italian countenance and rapt eyes—drinking it all in as a sort of necessary atmosphere of the daily life, yet with our own little interests and occupations as well—reading, colouring prints, looking into illustrated books, nursing a cat, or whatever came uppermost. The talk was essentially of a serious

and often an elevated kind, but varied with any amount of lively banter, anecdote, or jest, and with those familiar reminiscences of the old days and the old country so poignantly dear to the exile's heart. As has already been partly indicated, no period passed, even in our infancy, at which we were much less capable of following a conversation in Italian than in English; and we could pick out tolerably something of French in talk, even before being set to learn the language grammatically. Italian grammar we—with the exception of Maria—hardly looked into at all as a matter of system, and English grammar was counted as pretty well explaining itself.

I regard it as more than probable that the perpetual excited and of course one-sided talk about Luigi Filippo and other political matters had something to do with the marked alienation from current politics which characterized my brother in his adolescent and adult years. He was not of a long-suffering temper, and may have thought the whole affair a considerable nuisance at times, and resolved that he at least would leave Luigi Filippo and the other potentates of Europe and their ministers, to take care of themselves.

I find some remarks in John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* (1873) which appear well worth attention; here I quote them as indicating the kind of intellectual savour which we absorbed in childhood, and which I conceive to have been eminently well adapted for ripening the faculties and keeping the feelings undebased. Mill, it will be perceived, is speaking of French (as contrasted with English) society, but what he says would apply in a general way to those Italians whom we were in the habit of seeing; though it must be allowed that several of them were commonplace persons in the fullest sense of the term. Mill says, speaking of the fifteenth year of his life—I abridge the passage here and there :—

“The greatest perhaps of the many advantages which I owed to this episode in my education was that of having breathed for a whole year the free and genial atmosphere of continental life. Having so little experience of English life, and the few people I knew being mostly such as had public objects, of a large and

personally disinterested kind, at heart, I was ignorant of the low moral tone of what in England is called Society; the habit of, not indeed professing, but taking for granted in every mode of implication, that conduct is of course always directed towards low and petty objects. I could not then know or estimate the difference between this manner of existence, and that of a people like the French, whose faults, if equally real, are at all events different; among whom sentiments, which by comparison at least may be called elevated, are the current coin of human intercourse, both in books and in private life; and, though often evaporating in profession, are yet kept alive in the nation at large by constant exercise, and stimulated by sympathy, so as to form a living and active part of the existence of great numbers of persons, and to be recognized and understood by all. Neither could I then appreciate the general culture of the understanding which results from the habitual exercise of the feelings, and is thus carried down into the most uneducated classes of several countries on the continent, in a degree not equalled in England among the so-called educated, except where an unusual tenderness of conscience leads to a habitual exercise of the intellect on questions of right and wrong. I even then felt, though without stating it clearly to myself, the contrast between the frank sociability and amiability of French personal intercourse, and the English mode of existence, in which everybody acts as if everybody else (with few or no exceptions) was either an enemy or a bore. In France, it is true, the bad as well as the good points, both of individual and of national character, come more to the surface, and break out more fearlessly in ordinary intercourse, than in England; but the general habit of the people is to show, as well as to expect, friendly feeling in every one towards every other, wherever there is not some positive cause for the opposite."

I will add here one word or two on the contrary side. I think that the base passion of envy is more common among Italian than among English people; likewise a certain penurious or stingy habit, which may however—among the Italians I knew in boyhood—have been chiefly due to the much greater expense of living which they found in England, beyond what they had known in Italy. To spend a pound sterling wore, in their eyes, a different aspect from what it

does in a Londoner's. As to what is commonly called "morality," those Italians (so far as I can review them now) look to me, as a class, quite up to the British level ; but of course the point could not be estimated by me in boyhood, and since the close of my father's life my knowledge of Italians in England is practically a blank ; and the same was the case with my brother.

## VI.

*CHILDISH BOOK-READING AND SCRIBBLING.*

DANTE ROSSETTI'S earliest education was conducted by our mother ; little or not at all by our father, apart from the general mental incitement (and this assuredly counted for a good deal) which his conversation, his using the Italian language, and his readings of his poems, supplied. I may say in this connexion that my own education—allowing for the moderate difference of age—proceeded *pari passu* with my brother's ; and that my two sisters owed *everything* in the way of early substantial instruction to our mother. To school they never went at all. Thus all four of us were constantly together in infancy and childhood. Wherever one was, there the other was—and that was almost always at home. In what I have next to say I shall aim at confining myself to Dante Gabriel, but it will be understood that what is true of him applies mainly to the other three children as well.

Of course our religious mother gave Dante some rudiments of Christian knowledge, from the Bible and the "Church Catechism," and at a suitable age took him to church. He got to know the whole Bible fairly well, and necessarily regarded it with reverence as one of the greatest and sublimest books in the world. *Job*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Apocalypse*, were the sections of the Scripture which, before he attained manhood and ever afterwards, he viewed with peculiar interest and homage. He must have been able to read currently, and to write with moderate neatness, soon

after completing five years of age. His early reading seems to have been all in English; although, as he spoke Italian, for ordinary household purposes, about as readily as English, and as the reading process in Italian is incomparably the easier of the two for a beginner, no reason is apparent to me why this was the case.

I lately came across two letters addressed by my father to my mother, August and September 1836, which give a clear indication as to the knowledge of Italian then possessed by Dante, in his ninth year. The first expresses some surprise at finding that Dante and his two juniors (Christina was not yet six) had perfectly understood a letter in Italian from their mother, read out to them. In his second letter, my father says that Dante and I, having received notes from Maria, chanted aloud, with great demonstrations of glee, the following stave:—

“ L'amabile Maria  
Ringraziata sia  
De' due biglietti suoi  
Mandati ad ambi noi.”<sup>1</sup>

This extemporized effusion must, I suppose, have been the performance of Dante Gabriel. These seem to be the first rhymes he ever concocted, and, if so, he rhymed in Italian earlier than in English. My father of course smiles over verses of such a calibre—which are, nevertheless, correct in rhyme and rhythm, and not (I should say) wrong in diction.

I think that the very first book my brother took to with strong personal zest was Shakespear's *Hamlet*—i.e., certain scenes of *Hamlet*, giving a fairly complete idea of the story, which were printed to accompany the outlines to that tragedy engraved after the then universally celebrated German artist, Retzsch. Both outlines and scenes interested him vastly at the age of five, or it may be even of four; and soon a relative (probably one of our aunts) gave him a Bowdler's Shakespear, in which he read numerous plays—and indeed

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to good-natured Maria for her two notes sent to both of us.

he read, unchecked, in un-Bowdlerised editions as well. A little incident serves to fix my memory as to dates etc. in this matter. Before I was six years of age, and therefore before the close of September 1835, I had a dangerous gastric illness; and, while I was recovering from that, Dante produced for my diversion, "out of his own head," a little series of drawn and coloured figures of the leading personages in the three parts of *Henry VI.* I need not say that these were childish performances in the most absolute sense. He can then have been at the utmost seven years and four months old, and was, I fancy, some months younger. The trilogy of *Henry VI.* was a great favourite with all of us; but, by the time when Dante was familiar with that drama, he was not less versed in several other plays of Shakespear. I might with confidence specify *The Tempest*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Henry IV.*, *Richard III.*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, and there were others as well. Of four of these we had outline-books similar to that of *Hamlet*—the designs by Retzsch, or by a less prominent German artist, Ruhl. There were also Retzsch's famous outlines to Göthe's *Faust*. Through these, with their accompanying text in English, my brother got to know, and to admire, something of *Faust*, not very long after *Hamlet*. Here was, at any rate, a good beginning for taste in poetry. Two other books with similar outlines were *Fridolin*, translated from Schiller (which we thought feeble stuff), and the *Dragon of Rhodes*.

The next immense favourite was Walter Scott. Some relative presented a pocket-edition of *Marmion* to Dante Rossetti at a very childish age. He ramped through it, and recited whole pages at a stretch—the death of Constance, the battle and death of Marmion, etc. Fitz-Eustace was regarded as a tame and correct-minded character rousing no interest. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *The Lady of the Lake* excited fully as much delight as *Marmion*; *The Lord of the Isles* and *Rokeby* only a little less. I can still recollect that one afternoon the junior master at our first school, the younger Mr.

Paul, called at our house for some purpose, and found us all four racing and tumbling about the floor, repeating in semi-drama the Battle of Clan Alpin, from *The Lady of the Lake*. Dante was then just about nine years of age. Along with Scott's poems the *Arabian Nights* went on at a great rate; the old English translation after Galland, and not long afterwards Lane's very different version. *The Waverley Novels* ensued pretty soon after the poems—*Ivanhoe* (the prime favourite), *Kenilworth*, *Quentin Durward*, etc. It may perhaps be as well to give here the opinion which, at a mature age, Dante Rossetti entertained of Walter Scott's novels. It is expressed in a letter of October 1871, addressed to Mr. William Bell Scott:—

“I have read several of Scott's novels here, and been surprised both at their usual melodramatic absurdities of plot, and their astounding command of character in the personages by whom all these improbabilities are enacted. The novels are wonderful works, with all their faults. *Guy Mannering* and *St. Ronan's Well*—neither of which I knew before—delighted me extremely. Another I read is *The Fair Maid of Perth*; which is on a level with the Victoria drama in some respects, but, in some points of conception and vivid reality in parts, can only be compared to the greatest imaginative works existing.”

These books—Shakespear, *Faust*, Scott, and the *Arabian Nights*—and, along with these, Keightley's *Fairy Mythology* (mentioned in a previous section), Monk Lewis's verse-collection *Tales of Wonder* (*Alonzo the Brave*, etc.), and the stirring ballad of *Chèvy Chase*—may certainly be regarded as the staple and the *fine fleur* of what Dante Rossetti revelled in up to the close of his tenth year or thereabouts. He always discerned the difference between the “Ghost in *Hamlet*” and a ghost by Monk Lewis. Other things are present to me as well: Carleton's *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver*, Gay's *Fables*, *Pascal Bruno* (a tale translated from Dumas), Fitzgreene Halleck's short poem of *Marco Bozaris*, an in-

cident of the Greek War of Independence. Of Burns he had a kind of idea, through looking into an edition sparsely illustrated by Westall; but the dialect was a bar to his taking very kindly to the poems. Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear* he skimmed and slighted. Of directly "funny" things I remember only *John Gilpin* and some jocosities of Hood in a *Comic Annual*. Naturally, too, there were the old nursery-rhymes in infantine years, and *The Peacock at Home*; and the old Fairy-tales, such as *Puss in Boots*, *Bluebeard*, *Cinderella*, *Jack the Giant-Killer*, *Beauty and the Beast*, etc. Our mother kept us adequately supplied with books having a directly religious or didactic aim—stories about "good little boys and girls," or the alternative naughty ones, and other such matter; but she, like a sensible woman, did not tie us down to liking them, in case we happened to dislike them—which we generally did. There were some of Miss Edgeworth's stories for children, such as *Frank*; Day's *Sandford and Merton*; *The Fairchild Family*, by Mrs. Sherwood, which last we were far from relishing. The one which I recollect as best esteemed was *The Son of a Genius*, by Mrs. Hofland; a companion story was *The Daughter of a Genius*. A minute edition of *Stories from English History*, by James Mill, was very frequently in our hands, with prints—the Druids burning victims in wicker cages to their gods, Queen Margaret and the Robber, and so on.

Illustrated books and engravings were not very numerous in our house, but still in fair quantity. One that Dante and the rest of us looked at continually, beginning well nigh in infancy, was an old-fashioned little book (1700) in the Dutch language, named *Metamorphosis Naturalis*, by a painter (Goedaerdt), with coloured prints of insects and their transformations. Blank wonderment, with much of stimulating pleasure and something of repulsion, was the result. Later on, and never tired of, came *Martin and Westall's Illustrations of the Bible*; and to his last day Dante would have told you that Martin was an imaginative pictorial genius of no mean power. Afterwards some one gave him a book of

rather large outline engravings from Scripture, after the Old Masters—emptyish-looking things which he frequently inspected, with little real sympathy. I have always thought that his indifference to the respectable conventions of Old-Masterhood, leading on to the Præraphaelite movement, had something to do with this book. Our grandfather had at Holmer Green some engravings after Rubens, the subjects from the story of Achilles. They met his fancy in a certain way, but he did not like their fleshy forms and florid manner. Also (belonging probably to Eliza Polidori) a book of English engravings from Raphael's Cartoons, with highly laudatory descriptions. Another of our grandfather's possessions was a fine large edition of Ariosto, with French engravings of last century. These were an endless delight to Dante, from the age of eleven or so onwards. He owned much earlier, as a present from the same relative, a little book of French or Flemish woodcut-illustrations to Bible history, dating towards 1580. They were probably artistic things of their kind, and he enjoyed their arbitrary treatment and unreasonable costumes. Among our father's books were a *Poliphili Hypnerotomachia*; Gombauld's *Endymion*, in English, with engravings, dated 1639; and a volume of pagan mythology with startling woodcuts of about the early seventeenth century—I presume it to have been the *De Naturâ Deorum* of Boccaccio. All these Dante inspected from time to time, with some gusto not unmingled with awe—each book being pronounced by our father to be a "*libro sommamente mistico*,"<sup>1</sup> according to his system of interpretation of mediæval and renaissance literature. In his opening years no prints were more frequently in Dante's hands than a series of lithographs from Roman history, the work of Filippo Pistrucci (there was also a different series, coloured allegorical designs); not very superior efforts of art, but far from being amiss in treatment of the subjects. At one time, after Dante had passed out of mere childhood, some one brought into our

<sup>1</sup> Book in the highest degree mystical.

house Pinelli's outlines from Roman history. These we admired most heartily, and I suppose with good reason. Some of Pinelli's subjects of Italian peasant and street life we knew already. Various other prints and drawings occur to my mind; but somewhere I must stop, and I stop here. Occasionally—it seems to me by no means often—he went to the National Gallery in childhood. Mr. Frederick J. Shields has recorded an interesting point that he heard from Dante Rossetti, who mentioned it to show the sound direction which, in many instances, his mother gave to his taste. On his first visit to the National Gallery—he may, I suppose, have been then just ten years of age<sup>1</sup>—he was inclined to admire the big, showy, and (to an untrained eye) somewhat telling picture by Benjamin West, *Christ healing the Sick*; but his mother, who made no pretence to technical knowledge in art, at once set him right by remarking that it was “common-place and expressionless.” What two epithets could go closer to the root of the thing?

It has often been said, by writers who know nothing very definite about the matter, that Dante Rossetti was, from childhood or early boyhood, a devoted admirer of the stupendous poet after whom he was christened. This is a mistake. No doubt our father's Dantesque studies saturated the household air with wafts and rumours of the mighty Alighieri; therefore the child breathed Dante (so to speak), but he did not think Dante, nor lay him to heart. On the contrary, our father's speculations and talk about Dante—which, although he highly valued the poetry as such, all took an abstruse or theoretic turn—rather alienated my brother than otherwise, and withheld him from “looking up” the Florentine, to see whether his poems were things readable, like those of Shakespear, Scott, or Göthe. With all of us children the case was the same. I question whether my

<sup>1</sup> The National Gallery, in its present building, opened to the public in April 1838. The first nucleus of the collection had previously been housed in Pall Mall, but I surmise that none of my family ever went there.

brother had ever read twenty consecutive lines of Dante until he was some fifteen or sixteen years of age; no doubt after that he rapidly made up for lost time. Our father, when writing about the *Comedia* or the *Vita Nuova*, was seen surrounded by ponderous folios in italic type, "*libri mistici*" and the like (often about alchemy, freemasonry, Brahminism, Swedenborg, the Cabbala, etc.), and filling page after page of prose, in impeccable handwriting, full of underscorings, interlineations, and cancellings. We contemplated his labours with a certain hushed feeling, which partook of respect and also of levity, but were assuredly not much tempted to take up one of his books, and see whether it would "do to read." The *Convito* was always a name of dread to us, as being the very essence of arid unreadableness. Dante Alighieri was a sort of banshee in the Charlotte Street houses; his shriek audible even to familiarity, but the message of it not scrutinized.

As to all this, a passage in my brother's Preface to his book *Dante and his Circle* ought to have prevented any misapprehension concerning the supposed constant reading of Alighieri in very childish years. He says:—

"The first associations I have are connected with my father's devoted studies, which, from his own point of view, have done so much towards the general investigation of Dante's writings. Thus, in those early days, all around me partook of the influence of the great Florentine; till, from viewing it as a natural element, I also, *growing older*, was drawn within the circle."

There was an English artist named Seymour Kirkup, domiciled in Florence. He was made a Barone of the Italian Kingdom, and must be remembered by many persons now living, as he only died towards 1879, aged ninety-two or thereabouts. He was an enthusiast for Dante, and was a profound believer in my father's scheme of Dantesque interpretation. He began corresponding with my father towards 1837, and kept this up for several years. It was in 1839 that he took a leading part in discovering the portrait of the youthful

Dante, by Giotto, in the Bargello of Florence, long lost under whitewash. He made at once a good full-sized coloured drawing of this invaluable portrait (now, sad to say, no longer in a perfectly authentic state), and sent the drawing as a present to my father; from him it came to my brother, and was only disposed of in the sale of his effects which followed his death in 1882. The receipt of this portrait probably put the mind and feelings of Dante Rossetti as much *en rapport* with the Florentine poet as any incident which had preceded it; but even so he did not take any immediate steps for acquainting himself with the poems.

My brother's first "poem"—his almost solitary drama<sup>1</sup>—was written in his own handwriting, towards the age of five. He may have been just six, rather than five, but I am not certain. It is entitled *The Slave*, and it lies before me at this moment. Why he wrote *The Slave*, or what he supposed himself to mean in writing it, is not clear to me. One can, however, form one safe inference—that his inspiration derived from seeing, *passim* in Shakespear, the words "Slave, Traitor, Villain," and what not. *The Slave* consists of three Scenes in two "Acts"; it only fills nine small pages of large writing. The writing begins by imitating print, but goes on into an ordinary (very childish) cursive hand. Probably Dante Gabriel learned how to write cursively while the drama was in course of composition. It surprises me to note that the spelling is strictly correct: the blank verse (when it occurs, for some parts are in truncated verse, or practical prose) is also correct enough—as here:—

"Ho, if thou be alive, come out and fight me!"

"Down, slave, I dare thee on! Coward, thou diest!"

"But yet I will not live to see thee thus."

This matter of versification correct in accent and number of feet, however puerile in other respects, may to some readers seem stranger than it does to me; for I cannot, with reference

<sup>1</sup> I say "*almost* solitary," because I possess another trifle in the dramatic form—a mere piece of grotesque banter—of a late date, 1878.

to any one of us four, remember any time when, knowing what a verse was, we did not also know and feel what a *correct* verse was. The early reading of really good poetry, and perhaps quite as much the constant hearing of our father's verses recited with perfect articulation and emphasis, may account for this.

The *Dramatis Personæ* of *The Slave* are set down thus:—"Don Manuel, a Spanish Lord; Traitor, an Officer; Slave, a Servant to Traitor; Mortimer, an English Knight; Guards, Messengers, etc." No plot is apparent, only constant oburgation and fighting. The utmost stretch of conjecture as to a plot would amount simply to this: Don Manuel is entitled to the allegiance of Traitor, who has deserted him, and sides with Mortimer; Slave is viewed with suspicion by all three; Traitor, getting the worst of it in a fight, kills himself; Mortimer, as an act of condolence for Traitor, kills *himself*; Slave is killed by Don Manuel, who is left surviving, *faute de mieux*. It will be observed that there is no "female interest" in the *The Slave*; and in fact the "gushing or ecstatic female" was, to all us infants, a personage less provocative of sentiment than of mirth. Often and fatuously did we laugh over Coleridge's poem of *Love (Genevieve)*—the very poem which, in an edition of Coleridge that I possess, my brother, in one of his latest years, marked with the word "Perfection."

In the same minute paper-book which contains *The Slave* Dante followed on, in a rather less rudimentary handwriting, with *The Beauties of Shakespeare*. These consist singly of Portia's speech, "The quality of mercy is not strained." Then comes *Aladdin, or The Wonderful Lamp, by Gabriel Rossetti, Painter of Play-Pictures* (this refers to his constant industry in colouring prints of stage-characters). *Aladdin* is in prose, and only a few lines were written, totally uninteresting. The sole amusing point about it is the List of Personages, which are assigned to such minor performers as "Mrs. Siddons, Mr. Kemble, Mr. Kean," and others whose names he got no doubt from his theatrical prints. The three

above named were already dead at the time. Mrs. Siddons, and more particularly Kemble (John Philip), had been well known—I may here observe—to Gaetano Polidori. After *Aladdin*, a few pages of the book are filled with drawings (of a kind). One is Guy Fawkes, with lantern and dagger. He is done in heavy ink-silhouette, which is blotted down upon the page that faces him.

And so much for *The Slave* and its adjuncts; which I might barely have mentioned, but for the fact that this “drama” has been adverted to in print before now, and it seemed desirable to settle once for all what it amounted to.

I must say a little more about infantine drawings—some in pencil, most in pen and ink, many of them coloured. Two represent his dormouse “Dwanging”; and, as Dwanging (so it appears to me) hardly existed at a date later than the completion of Dante’s sixth year (12 May 1834), these must be extremely early affairs, not wholly unlike the look of the animal. To 1834 belongs also (as I have said) a portrait of his rocking-horse. These three are so far tolerable as to show that it was a pity he did not draw a little oftener from actual objects, but almost always mere inventions (such as they were), prompted to a large extent by his theatrical-character prints, with straddling legs and irrational pretences at costume. One that seems to my memory very early indeed is Macbeth contemplating the ærial dagger. A little book of childish drawings exists, chiefly from various plays. I will only name one subject from each play, as marked in our mother’s handwriting—a pretty good indication that Dante himself was barely competent to write neatly at the time. These comprise *Talbot rescuing his son John from Orleans* (Shakespeare’s *Henry VI.*); *Buckingham and Catesby presenting the crown to Richard*; *Prince Henry throwing Falstaff’s bottle of sack at him*; *Combat between Macbeth and young Siward*; *Casca stabbing Cæsar*; *Rolla carrying off the Child* (from Sheridan’s *Pizarro*).

In concluding this account of Dante Rossetti’s earliest years, I must observe that he was certainly fortunate in his

family surroundings. His father was a poet and man of letters, his grandfather the same; his mother had a good appreciation of literary matters; his sisters and brother all watched with interest and seconded with zest whatever he did as a beginning at writing and at drawing. He had also the vast advantage of speaking two languages, of which one served as a direct introduction to Latin. In no quarter did he encounter anything to thwart his inclinations, to divert his steps, or to throw cold water on his small performances. He was not wilfully spoiled nor absurdly petted, nor was any difference made between him and the other children; but he felt himself to be encouraged as well as loved, and in most matters he had his own way. This, with the temper which was innate in him, he would perhaps have got anyhow; as things went, he got it unenforced. Naturally this favourable condition of family relations continued to grow with his growth.

## VII.

### *SCHOOL.*

IT must have been after the midsummer holidays of 1836 that Dante Rossetti first went to school; I followed him after the Christmas holidays. The school was that of the Rev. Mr. Paul, in Foley Street, Portland Place—a day-school for most of the pupils, or perhaps all. There was, I think, only one assistant master, Mr. Paul's son. The pupils were not numerous—say twenty-five to thirty-five. They must chiefly have been sons of local tradesmen. I remember one set of boys—three brothers—of gentle birth and breeding, the Cummings; also Aikman, who (I have an impression) became an officer of some distinction in the Indian army. We were instructed in some rudimentary matters—writing, arithmetic (Dante Gabriel was always bad at this, and to the end of his days I fancy he would have been at fault here and there in the multiplication table), English grammar, geography,

history, and the first steps in Latin. We also had to do a "theme" once or twice—a composition upon some given subject;<sup>1</sup> and we received some little drawing tuition from a French Master, M. Abeille, whom we considered deft in his touch of foliage. We liked the younger Mr. Paul; to the elder we had—and ought to have had—no objection, but I remember little of him. One of my few individual recollections of the school is that of hearing there the tolling bell which announced the death of King William the Fourth. Among our school-books was a volume of selections, prose and poetry, named *The Rhetorical Class-book*, containing such pieces as Campbell's *Lochiel's Warning*, and his *Last Man*, with marginal directions as to the proper tone, inflexion, gesture, etc., for reciting them. We enjoyed a great deal of the text in this book, and giggled over the directions—having always had in our father, and indeed in our mother too, models that would have bettered that form of instruction.

An English school such as that of Mr. Paul (and I must say the same of King's College School, to which we went afterwards) is not an academy of good manners, nor yet of high thinking; and it would be too true to acknowledge that Dante Rossetti rapidly deteriorated here. I would add the same very emphatically of myself, but that I am not exactly in question, and need not intrude my small personality. At home he had witnessed nothing but resolute and cheerful performance of duty, and heard nothing that was not pure right, high-minded, and looking to loftier things. School first brought him face to face with that which is "common and unclean." There is always some nasty-thinking boy to egg-on his juniors upon a path of unsavouriness. A certain

<sup>1</sup> If the reader would like a laugh, he may perhaps get it out of the following. One of the schoolboys (I do not mean either Dante or myself) was told to do a theme on Candour. His theme—I have never forgotten it—was in the following words, as near as may be: "My dear father—I want to write to you on the subject of Candour. He is a most benevolent, candid, honourable, sordid, and surly young man. His friends love him dearly."

A. (his initial shall stand instead of his name), who sat next to Dante Gabriel, beset him with promptings of a worse than useless kind. One thing was pointing out phrases in the Bible which he held to be vastly amusing, but which little Dante did not want to be teased with. Dante mentioned the matter to his father, who conferred with Mr. Paul; and A. was ordered to take a different seat in the school, and stick to it. This is nearly all that I remember in a definite way about Mr. Paul's school. Dante was a ready learner, and a willing one enough. The last performance, as the school was breaking up for the holidays, was an evening of recitations in the presence of parents and friends. Dante delivered (from Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*) the speech of Antony over the body of Cæsar, and I the speech of Brutus. We were clapped to our heart's content.

As a Professor in King's College, Gabriele Rossetti was entitled to send one son to the day-school there free of charge, and a second son at reduced fees. It had therefore always been intended that we boys should go to that school as soon as a little preliminary instruction had been gained at Mr. Paul's establishment; and thither accordingly we went after the midsummer holidays of 1837. Dante was rightfully admissible, having attained the regulation age of nine; I was not so, being not quite eight, but was allowed to pass muster. As this is a day-school (although a few pupils were housed as boarders), we went daily to and fro. At first we took the route by Regent Street and the Strand to Somerset House, but afterwards preferred the more plebeian, and to us more amusing, shops of Tottenham Court Road and St. Giles's (no New Oxford Street then existed). The Head Master was the Rev. Dr. Major, of whom, in Dante Gabriel's time, we saw little. The Principal was Dr. Lonsdale, Bishop of Lichfield. The school was then, as it is now, of strict Church-of England principle, and most of the masters were clergymen. On one or two occasions I saw prizes distributed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Howley—a little old man, still wearing the episcopal white wig, of the gentlest manner and address, almost apologetic to the students (so it seemed)

for so far putting himself forward. He was—in regard at least to aspect and demeanour—anything but one of those *vescovi pettoruti* (bishops high in flesh) who were frequently in my father's mouth ; for the latter disliked the worldly well-being and brow-beating respectability of the Anglican clergy only a little less than the arrogant bigotry of their Roman compeers. The great prize-receiver in those days was Arthur Cayley, the pre-eminent Cambridge Mathematician, who would come up for three or four successive prizes in one afternoon. His younger brother, Charles Bagot Cayley, was one of my father's pupils in Italian, and learned the language admirably, as shown by his fine translations of Dante and Petrarca—a most estimable scholarly man, without a taint of mundane self-seeking. I forget how many languages he knew. If he did not know one, he only had to learn it. He was once asked, by some missionary or other society, to translate the Gospels for the Iroquois. He went to the British Museum Library, looked up an Iroquois grammar or two, and, at the end of six weeks or so, he undertook the task, and performed it.

My brother and myself entered King's College School in the lowest class—the Lower First—of which the Rev. Mr. Hayes was the Master. Some schoolboy called him “Bantam,” from his red complexion and facial angle ; and every other schoolboy followed suit. To us he was kind ; and he perhaps stretched a point by returning our “characters,” in the first quarterly report, as “in every respect satisfactory” for Dante, and for myself “in the highest degree commendable.” Some other good reports of us may have followed, but certainly none so flowery as that.

Dante Rossetti's school-life at King's College lasted just five years, from the autumn of 1837 to the summer of 1842. He had no further schooling of any kind, except some German lessons taken at home, and his instruction for the pictorial profession. When he left school, he wrote an excellent hand ; knew Latin reasonably well, up to Sallust, Ovid, Virgil, etc. ; had the beginning of a knowledge of Greek, but I can hardly

say whether, after a few years' interval, he could even read the Greek characters with any readiness; understood French well—well enough to begin forthwith, which he did, reading any number of French novels for himself; and had some inkling on subjects of history, geography, etc. He always saw easily into linguistic and grammatical matters, so far as he cared to pursue them. He had also been brought on a little in drawing, of a more or less sketchy kind. In the classes generally (but not in the drawing-class) the boys had to be seated in the order of their proficiency, one of them "taking the place" of another as occasion arose; and Dante was usually pretty near the head of a class. Of anything even distantly tending to science—algebra, geometry, etc.—he learned nothing whatever. The religious instruction at King's College School counted for little: there were some prayers and a chapter of the Bible in the morning. But all this time he continued going to church *en famille*, without much liking or any serious distaste. In early childhood came Trinity Church, Marylebone Road; then St. Katharine's, Regent's Park; then Christ Church, Albany Street.

I will run over a few other particulars—I hope, with due brevity. The Upper First Class was conducted by the Rev. Mr. Cockayne, who became—or possibly then was—a good scholar in Early English. The Second, by the Rev. Swinburne Carr, author of a serviceable *History of Greece*. The Third, by the Rev. Mr. Hodgson, an ungainly little man whom the boys did not like. I cannot say that Dante or myself had any reason to complain of him. There was a legend that he knew very little about the matters on which he instructed the boys, and that he had to prepare his own lessons over-night. As to this I of course know nothing. In the Fourth Class, the last which Dante Gabriel entered, the Master was the Rev. Mr. Fearnley. Of him also a legend was current, purporting to account for a seam visible in his throat. It was really, I presume, a seam of a scrofulous nature; but the legend ran that he had once cut his throat with suicidal intention, and had only been saved at the last gasp. Mr. Fearnley,

a large stalwart man, was considered severe, and the boys were not very fond of being promoted into his class—which may be a reason why some one concocted the legend. Each of these classes numbered some thirty boys, more or less ; perhaps one or two of them attained to forty.

There were also the Writing and Arithmetic Masters, the French Masters, and the Drawing Masters. Mr. Allsop, the Head Writing Master, was a great adept in his craft, and would at times come round to one class or another displaying a *chef d'œuvre* of calligraphy, full of the most astonishing flourishes. He was odd, and left the school not long after we entered it ; and I fear that the story I was told, that he had gone out of his mind, was a true one. His successor was a small old man, Mr. Hutton, of venerable grandfatherly aspect, with white hair. He was easily put out, and some of the boys, being as pitiless as other boys, put him out when they could. Dante held aloof from this indignity. The French Masters were Mm. Gassion and Wattez, and Professor Brasseur, all very competent men ; the first two considerate to their pupils, and the third, who could be sarcastic as well as considerate, a scholar of some rank. He was afterwards French Preceptor to the Prince of Wales, and died at a recent date, aged, I think, about ninety. The Drawing Master was the most interesting personage of all—the celebrated member of the Norwich School of Painting, John Sell Cotman. He was aged fifty-five when Dante Rossetti entered King's College School—an alert, forceful-looking man, of moderate stature, with a fine well-moulded face, which testified to an impulsive nature somewhat worn and wearied. He seemed sparing of speech, but high-strung in whatever he said. In fact, the seeds of madness lurked in this distinguished artist, although, apart from a rather excitable or abrupt manner in ruling his bear-garden, I never noticed any symptoms of it. Pretty soon he left the school, and, just as Dante also was leaving it, in July 1842, he died insane. Mr. Cotman's course of instruction did not extend far beyond giving us pencil-sketches, often of his own, to copy—fisher-folk, troopers, peasants,

boating, etc. Dante's copies were, I suppose, considered to count among the more satisfactory, but I am not aware that Cotman ever fixed particular attention upon him. As Drawing Master he was succeeded by his son, Miles Edward Cotman. The latter died in 1858, aged only forty-seven ; and I fancy that he also, though perfectly quiet and collected in manner, was a little peculiar.

In Mr. Hall Caine's book—*Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 1882—there is a passage which deserves quotation here :—

“He is described, by those who remember him at this period, as a boy of a gentle and affectionate nature, albeit prone to outbursts of masterfulness. It is said that he was brave and manly of temperament, courageous as to personal suffering, eminently solicitous of the welfare of others, and kind and considerate to such as he had claims upon. This is no doubt true portraiture ; but it must be stated (however open to explanation, on grounds of laudable self-depreciation) that it is not the picture which he himself used to paint of his character as a boy. He often described himself as being destitute of personal courage when at school, as shrinking from the amusements of school-fellows, and fearful of their quarrels—not wholly without generous impulses, but in the main selfish of nature, and reclusive in habit of life. He would have had you believe that school was to him a place of semi-purgatorial probation.”

All this is put in a very fair spirit by Mr. Caine, and it merits a little reflection. No one now alive perhaps, except myself, could, with any clear knowledge and recollection, say whether Dante Rossetti was “destitute of personal courage when at school.” I do not consider that he was by any means thus destitute. I have seen him fight with a proper degree of tenacity when the occasion arose ; but it is strictly true that he was “fearful of the quarrels” of schoolfellows, in the sense that he totally disliked that loutish horse-play and that scrambling pugnacity which are so eminently distinctive of the British stripling. The meaningless defiance, the bullying onset, and the mauling scuffle, looked to him ugly, base, detestable, and semi-human. If he was mistaken, I should

like to know wherein. The bull-dog propensity to pin somebody by the muzzle, whether deserving to be so pinned or not, was not any part of his character, inborn or acquired. Neither had he any liking for being set up by his school-fellows, without quarrel of his own, to fight a boy two or three inches taller than himself, and with half as much again in thews and sinews. That he was "in the main selfish of nature" is true when the statement is properly understood, but it might easily be misconstrued. He was selfish, in the sense of self-centred. His own aims, his own opportunities, the working-out of such faculty as he found within himself—these were always his chief concern. To term him "self-willed"—which he most eminently was from first to last—would give a much more correct idea than to term him "selfish." He was not selfish in the sense of being dull in affection to others, indifferent to their welfare, or unwilling to exert himself to do them a benefit. He had a theory, which I have heard him express at various periods of life, that men who have an originating gift—or, in a broad sense, what we call men of genius—are all selfish in that same mood of being self-centred. He would say it of such poets as Dante, Milton, Göthe, Wordsworth, Shelley, or of Shakespeare if the facts of his life were adequately known—of such painters and sculptors as Titian, Cellini, Rembrandt, Blake, and Turner. And here again I apprehend that he was remote from being wrong. That "school was to him a place of semi-purgatorial probation" is, I dare say, nearly true. It is a fact however that, if in reality he felt this at the time deeply, he passed it off lightly; for to me, who was his daily colleague and confidant, he never, so far as I can remember, unbosomed himself to any such effect. That contact with school-life did the reverse of good to the character of the boyish Rossetti is what I have already avowed. His regard for veracity, the strictness of his sense of honour, his readiness to brave inconvenience for principle, were subject to daily undermining; for the moral atmosphere around reeked too perceptibly of untruth, slipperiness, and

shirking. His temper too, which was always an arbitrary and peremptory one, did not improve ; but he retained unimpaired two valuable qualities—an easy good-nature, and a facility at forgiving and forgetting. From infancy onwards he was always a great favourite with servants, shoe-blackening men, organ-grinders, and people of the like class. Brightness of parts and brightness of manner ensured this.

I have not yet referred to the statement reported by Mr. Caine about “shrinking from the amusements of schoolfellows.” This is entirely true, if “shrinking” means “abstaining.” He cared nothing for rough pastimes—though he would race about in the scanty playground with others, bear a hand in snowballing, and so on ; but anything which would derive from personal liking, and would require time, pains, and practice—such as skating, fishing, or cricket—he left entirely aside. He did not want it ; therefore he did not pursue it. To learn swimming, boating, and riding, would, no doubt, at school and after school, have been a benefit to him—a benefit which the habits and circumstances of the family and his own indifference withheld.

I was interested lately at finding, in a little *Memorial Volume* on Edgar Allan Poe, a poet of my brother's marked predilection, an account of that singular genius as a schoolboy which might almost have been penned for Dante Rossetti. The volume was published at Baltimore in 1877, and cannot be widely known on this side of the Atlantic. The writer of the passage is Poe's schoolfellow at Richmond, Virginia, Colonel J. T. L. Preston. He says :—

“Poe, as I recall my impressions now, was self-willed, capricious, inclined to be imperious, and, though of generous impulses, not steadily kind or even amiable.”

For Rossetti, the last clause should rather run—“not definitely amiable, nor even always steadily kind.”

The punishments in King's College School were of a mild character. There was no flogging. Now and again an irritated master would cuff a boy, or give him a bang on the

head with a book. This was an extempore, and I suppose an unsanctioned, performance. An offender was made to stand out in the middle of the room, or to stand upon a form for a while ; or he was "kept in" during playtime ; or he had to do an "imposition," such as copying out the same line from Virgil fifty times over. An ingenious boy would brace together two or three pens at a proper gradient, and thus write two or three lines with one turn of the hand.

There was no schoolfellow with whom Dante Rossetti contracted an intimate acquaintance, far less a life-long friendship ; but two or three were in our house at times, or we in theirs. One of these was young Lockhart, a grandson of Sir Walter Scott, aged about thirteen when Dante was nine ; a handsome, slim, straight-built youth, with very correct features. He was a great hand at cutting out little models of boats. He became the Lieutenant Walter Scott Lockhart-Scott, owner of Abbotsford, and died in 1853, aged only twenty-seven. Another boy was a son of William Westall the Landscape-painter (brother of the Richard Westall so well-known to Dante Rossetti through *Martin and Westall's Illustrations of the Bible*, a painter of some note in his day, who gave instructions to the Princess Victoria). This boy had a brother of weak mind and sometimes rather dangerous (not in King's College School), who went by the undignified name of "Sillikin." Another boy was Geldart Evans Riadore, who became a clergyman, and (I believe) Domestic Chaplain to the Duke of Buccleuch, a lad of good parts and refinement, son of a Doctor. Also the Wrays, sons of a deceased Colonial Judge ; Boys, son of a leading printseller ; Capper, whose father was a coal-merchant ; Charles Anderson, who became a clergyman, doing good service in the East End of London ; and the Willoughbys, sons of a legal gentleman living in Lancaster Place, close to King's College. Their family had the *entrée* to the Terrace of Somerset House overlooking the river ; and we would sometimes join them on a half-holiday or holiday, taking possession of a little lodge there, burning shavings in an empty grate, and making an amount of noise

which was not kindly taken by the Government Clerks whose windows opened on to the Terrace. These several boys are about all I could specify. I make no mention of a very few others who were little or not at all known to my brother in his schooldays, but only to myself while my schooling was prolonged beyond his.

Dante Rossetti had a certain faint repute among his class-fellows as being addicted to drawing or sketching—making, on an exercise-book or the margin of a school-book, something that was understood to figure a knight, cavalier, trooper, brigand, or what not—or as buying and colouring theatrical characters, illustrated serials, and the like. To this small extent, therefore, he was noted as a little uncommon; and of course his foreign name and comparatively unschoolboy-like habits counted for something. I suppose also—though I do not recollect precise instances in point—that he was known for reciting verses. A certain schoolfellow, probably after Dante had left, handed over to me three or four poetical compositions which he himself had produced, one of them beginning with the words, “I would I were a smiling bird.” Dante laughed over the term, and made a portrait of the bird in the act of smiling.

The year 1842, when he quitted school, was the year of the Anglo-Chinese Opium War. He and I were told by a Master to make an original composition on the subject of China, and I think the composition had to be in verse. What he or I wrote I have totally forgotten: seemingly each of us must have produced some lines. Christina saw us at work, and chose to enter the poetic lists. She was then eleven years of age. She indited the following epical lines, which must (I apprehend) have been nearly the first verses she ever wrote.<sup>1</sup> Will the reader pardon my printing them?

<sup>1</sup> There was a neat couplet which *may* have been earlier:—

“‘Come cheer up, my lads, ’tis to glory we steer!’

As the soldier remarked whose post lay in the rear.”

Two stanzas, dated 27 April 1842, for our mother’s birthday (our grandfather printed them on a card) were, I consider, earlier also. The original MS.—of a very childish aspect—is now in the British Museum.

## THE CHINAMAN.

" 'Centre of Earth ! ' a Chinaman he said,  
 And bent over a map his pig-tailed head,—  
 That map in which, portrayed in colours bright,  
 China, all dazzling, burst upon the sight :  
 'Centre of Earth ! ' repeatedly he cries,  
 'Land of the brave, the beautiful, the wise ! '  
 Thus he exclaimed ; when lo his words arrested  
 Showed what sharp agony his head had tested.  
 He feels a tug—another, and another—  
 And quick exclaims, 'Hallo ! what's now the bother ? '  
 But soon alas perceives. And, 'Why, false night,  
 Why not from men shut out the hateful sight ?  
 The faithless English have cut off my tail,  
 And left me my sad fortunes to bewail.  
 Now in the streets I can no more appear,  
 For all the other men a pig-tail wear.'  
 He said, and furious cast into the fire  
 His tail: those flames became its funeral-pyre."

## VIII.

*HOME-LIFE DURING SCHOOL—SIR HUGH THE HERON.*

I HAVE already said that Dante Rossetti (as well as the rest of us) used in early childhood to get some countrifying at our grandfather's house, Holmer Green in Buckinghamshire. There he loitered about a little, doing nothing particular. His chief amusement was to haunt a pond in the grounds, and catch frogs. It concerned him to notice that, if he held a frog any considerable while in his hand, the skin of the amphibian's throat, lacking its proper quota of moisture, would split across. This did not cure him of catching frogs ; but he was fain to hope that his captive, on being restored to its pond, would find its throat "sewing itself up again." All his life he liked most animals (though he had little ado with dogs, and none with horses), and was not ill-natured to any. Even a black beetle was regarded with a certain indulgence ; it was an animal, much like another.

These little and never frequent country excursions came to an end in 1839, when our grandfather resettled in London ; and then Dante Rossetti, for two or three years, went out of London not at all, for our father had not the habit of making any annual seaside or rural trip. Dante's holidays, when school closed, were spent at home in London, varied by casual walks up to Hampstead, or the like. He painted theatrical characters, read books, and amused himself as the chance offered ; and now he had at least the resource of going to his grandfather's house near Regent's Park whenever he felt so inclined. The house contained many books. It had, at the back, a moderate-sized garden, sloping down towards Regent's Canal ; and in this garden a shed or summer-house sheltered the private printing-press which Polidori used. The fact—such I believe it to be—that Dante never once tried what he could do as a compositor is one more symptom of his great inaptitude at anything of a mechanical or directly practical kind. The workaday world was not *his* world.

In this house occurred a small incident which Mr. Caine has related—not with perfect accuracy. It did not take place when Dante was “rather less than nine years of age,” for he was already eleven when our grandfather entered the house. The incident may really belong to his twelfth, or possibly his thirteenth, year. He did not deliberately set-to at reciting the closing scene of *Othello* ; but, taking up a chisel, he playfully motioned to strike Christina with it. As Maria had sense enough to object that it might hurt, he insisted that it would not ; and (then for the first time speaking a few lines from *Othello*, ending—

“I took by the throat the circumcised dog,  
And smote him thus”)

he struck the chisel forcibly against his chest. Naturally there was an incision, but not a serious one. Sangiovanni probed it, and pretty soon it was healed. The small matter is hardly worth adverting to, but may as well be set right.

Another small matter, a little more symptomatic as to the

boyhood of Rossetti, is the following. Maria was, as previously intimated, of an uncommonly enthusiastic temper, which eventually settled down into religious devotion. As she read very early and very constantly, her enthusiasms developed in divers directions : British tars, Napoleon, Englishmen *versus* Scotchmen (in relation to Walter Scott's writings), Grecian mythology, and the *Iliad*. Pope's translation alone was known to her. When Dante and I began learning Greek she resolved to learn some too, partly to help us in our lessons ; and she made her way into the Greek New Testament, and could in her later years still read it fairly with the aid of a dictionary. While the *Iliad* fit was at its height, Dante, to please her, undertook to do a series of pen-and-ink designs for the epic, on a small scale, one design to each Book. This was in February 1840, when he was eleven years of age. These drawings—they still exist—are not in any tolerable degree good, nor even distinctly promising ; but they may count for something as showing the lad's ambitious temper in design, and his willingness to take up any attempt that offered, however ludicrously inadequate his means for coping with it. I may add that Dante at this time, although he had not that glowing love of the *Iliad* which his sister entertained, liked it highly, and read it much. In later years he knew, and he also preferred, the *Odyssey*.

From the *Iliad* I pass to other books read by Dante in his school-days, as a sequel to the details previously given relating to a still earlier period. The poet who superseded Walter Scott as prime favourite (always allowing for Shakespeare, who was never superseded though he may have been less constantly read) was Byron. *The Siege of Corinth* came first in the boy's esteem, and next *Mazeppa* and *Manfred*, with *The Corsair* and others to follow. *Childe Harold* he read, but without special zest ; in fact, throughout his life, the poetry of sentimental or reflective description had a very minor attraction for him. Of Dickens's *Pickwick*, which came out in 1836, he seems to me to have known comparatively little ; but *Nicholas Nickleby*, 1838-9, was very potent with

him, followed by *Oliver Twist*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *Barnaby Rudge*, etc. An illustrated serial named *Tales of Chivalry* (but chivalry is not more prominent in its pages than some other things) was constantly read, and its woodcuts inspected and coloured; also another serial, of earlier date, called *Legends of Terror*, full of ghosts, fiends, and magic, in prose and verse. There was likewise *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, abounding in dragons, enchanters, and other marvels of pseudo-chivalry. *Hone's Every-day Book*, with its amusing woodcuts, and the *Newgate Calendar*, were marked favourites. The mere thieves in the last-named repertory excited but a languid interest, but the murderers, and their "last dying speeches and confessions," were conned with decided gusto. Of highly-reputed romances there were Bulwer's *Rienzi* and *Last Days of Pompeii*, and, of minor romances, three serials—*Robin Hood* and *Wat Tyler*, both by Pierce Egan the younger, and *Ada the Betrayed, or The Murder at the Old Smithy*, by some obscure author whose name did not transpire. *Gil Blas* and *Don Quixote* were enjoyed, though not in any extreme degree. But perhaps in his earlier school-days—or from the age of nine to eleven—nothing delighted Dante quite so much as a small-sized series entitled *Brigand Tales*, with coloured illustrations. A subsequent series appeared, which he relished somewhat less, whether because he was growing out of them, or on account of their being more forced and worked up in incident. The opening series comprised *Moriano the Outlaw, or the Bandit of the Charmed Wrist*; *Beauty and the Bear, or The Bandit's Stratagem*; *The Female Brigand, or The Lover's Doom*; and a number of others: with such illustrations as *Desperate Encounter between Benedetto the Brigand and Jeronymo Arondini*; *Guillen Martino plundering the Monks of the Abbey of San Isidor*; *Pietro d'Armoredelli, Captain of Banditti, refusing to stay the Execution of his own Son*, etc., etc. This publication was followed by *Dramatic Tales*, a set of narratives from popular plays, contemporary or antecedent. These also were highly appreciated by Dante Rossetti. By

the time he left school—turned of fourteen—he had devoured numerous novels, poems, and dramas, apart from those here specified, almost all of them being in English. In Italian there was little beyond Ariosto; in French, it may be that Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* preceded the close of his schooling, but I am not sure. At any rate this, and many other works of Hugo, both prose and verse, fascinated him hugely very soon afterwards; and French novels by a variety of authors were greatly in the ascendant for two or three years. It may be feared there was *no* solid reading—whether history, biography, or anything else—irrespectively of the few and fragmentary things that he had to get up as a part of the school course. His intellectual life was nurtured upon fancy and sympathy, not upon knowledge or information.

Dante Rossetti did not write much in boyhood, but he wrote something. I question whether *The Slave* and *Aladdin* had any successor until in 1840 a grand scheme was started that every one of us four should write a romantic tale. I suppose each made a beginning, but I cannot affirm that any one of the quartette made an ending, unless it was Dante. His tale alone has been preserved, and it is so far completed as to bring a single set of incidents to a climax, without implying that anything else remains to be added. The tale is named *Roderick and Rosalba, a Story of the Round Table*. Its first chapter is headed, *The Knight, the Messenger, the Departure, the Hostelry, the Quarrel*; and it begins with the following sentence:—

“It was a dark and stormy night in the month of December when a figure, closely wrapped in the sable folds of his cloak, and mounted on a jaded steed, was seen hurrying across a bleak common towards a stately castle in the distance, whose lofty towers and time-worn battlements frowned over the wide expanse beneath.”

This may suffice; with the bare addition that the tale narrates how a lady was captured by a “marauder” who wanted to wed her perforce, and how she was rescued by her affianced

knight. At some later date—it was 1843, or possibly just afterwards—Dante took up his old MS., and evidently regarded it as much behind the time. He altered its title to *The Free Companions, a Tale of the Days of King Stephen*, cut it down freely, revised the phraseology of several remaining passages, and added a concluding sentence.

Rossetti's first printed "poem," *Sir Hugh the Heron, a Legendary Tale in Four Parts*, seems to have been begun and nearly completed much about the same time as *Roderick and Rosalba*, or not later than May 1841. It is founded on a prose story by Allan Cunningham, which Rossetti had read in the *Legends of Terror*, and I think elsewhere as well. His zest in writing this ballad-poem waned, and he laid it aside: but later on his grandfather Polidori told him that, if he would finish it, the luxury of print should be his at the private printing-press. So it was wound up, and printed in 1843, when Dante was either fourteen or fifteen years of age. The title-page is marked "for private circulation only"; and even private circulation was more than commensurate to the merit of *Sir Hugh the Heron*. The story is substantially that of a knight who quits England for a foreign war, leaving his betrothed to the care of his cousin. While abroad, he discovers, by a vision in a magic mirror, that the cousin has betrayed his trust, and is offering violence to the lady. The knight hastens home, slays the aggressor, and recovers his bride. The ballad is versified with ease and correctness, in three or four different metres, and is not wholly destitute of spirit in its boyish way; but the way is boyish in the fullest sense, and the poem cannot be said to show any express faculty or superior promise. Rossetti, when he grew up, hated to hear this puerile attempt alluded to. I used to have a large remainder-stock of *Sir Hugh the Heron*; but at his particular request, somewhere towards 1875, I rather reluctantly destroyed the whole impression, with the exception of a very few copies, and the ballad exists only for a dozen or so of curious collectors here and there, and for readers in the British Museum Library. My brother left

behind him a little memorandum (the handwriting indicates a date towards 1881), which runs as follows :—

“I make this note after a conversation with a friend who had been reading in the British Museum a ridiculous first attempt of mine in verse, called *Sir Hugh the Heron*, which was printed when I was fourteen, but written (except the last page or two) at twelve—as my family would probably remember. When I was fourteen my grandfather (who amused himself by having a small private printing-press) offered, if I would finish it, to print it. I accordingly added the last precious touches two years after writing the rest. I leave this important explanation, as there is no knowing what fool may some day foist the absurd trash into print as a production of mine. It is curious and surprising to myself, as evincing absolutely no promise at all—less than should exist even at twelve. When I wrote it, the *only* English poet I had read was Sir W. Scott, as is plain enough in it.”

This last statement is not wholly correct. There had been Shakespear, and I am sure, before my brother was twelve, a good deal of Byron as well.

I have by me a MS. of an effusion, *William and Marie*, shorter than *Sir Hugh the Heron*, written when my brother was fifteen, in a style which is compounded of Walter Scott and the old Scottish ballads ; it may also present some trace of Bürger's *Lenore*. This may be accounted a trifle inferior even to the performance denounced by its author in such vigorous terms. It narrates how a wicked Knight slew a virtuous one, hurled into a moat the virtuous one's lady-love, and got killed by an avenging flash of lightning. This my brother offered for publication to the Editor of some magazine—I fancy *Smallwood's Magazine*—along with an outline design to illustrate it. The outline, not so greatly amiss, is adapted from a group in one of Filippo Pistrucci's lithographs from Roman history, the Rape of the Sabines. The Editor was too sensible to publish either poem or design. It will be perceived that this small transaction belongs to a date a little later than that when Rossetti left school ; but it is mentioned

here so as to close my references to these very early efforts in verse. There may possibly have been a few others, but I fail to recollect any. The reader may have noticed that the times of chivalry always furnished his boyish inspiration; in fact, he thought of little else about this date. Neither the antique nor the modern exercised the least sway over his fancy.

A few words more may be bestowed upon childish drawings; I mention such only as I find inscribed with a distinct date. Two are coloured designs, October 1836 (age eight), from Monk Lewis's thrilling drama of *The Castle Spectre*. One is *Percy and Motley*, the other *Osmond and Kenrick*, each personage being in full face, which may suggest that little Dante hardly knew how to set about a profile. In 1838 he produced a scene of school-life from his "Lower First" class. It is lettered *Bantam battering* (*i.e.*, pummelling a boy); *Lower Division—Upper Division*. These two Divisions of the schoolboys are represented as indulging in a free fight. The design is not quite so bad as might be expected, the actions having a certain degree of natural spirit and diversity. Then comes, 1840, an illustrated title-page, forming a neat and rather prettyish decorative combination, for the four juvenile stories of which *Roderick and Rosalba* was one. Anyhow he got a great deal into the small space of a page of note-paper. There are four circular half-figures of armoured knights, and four oblong compositions exhibiting incidents in the tales. The four knights are inscribed thus: *A Romance of the 14th Century, Sir Aubrey de Metford; Roderick and Rosalba, Sir Roderick de Malvon; Raimond and Matilda, Sir Raimond de Meryl; Retribution, Sir Guy de Linton*. And the four compositions thus: *Sir Aubrey killing Herman Rudesheim; Sir Roderick rescuing Rosalba de Clare; Sir Raimond conquering Sir Richard; Sir Guy finding the letter of Ali*. Next are three small designs, 1840, from the *Arabian Nights*—*The Genius about to kill the Princess of the Isle of Ebony*, and two others. Three largeish separate figures from Bulwer's *Rienzi*, May to July 1840, come next; done with pen and ink in a

painstaking manner, though not with anything, in character or costume, above the types which Dante derived from his beloved theatrical characters. November 1840 witnessed the production of *Earl Warrene* (dictating, it would seem, the signing of Magna Charta). This is a companion-drawing to the *Rienzi* trio, but perceptibly better. Last we find a modern subject of a patriotic turn, taken, I assume, from a little volume of naval anecdotes which Maria used to cherish. Its theme is inscribed as follows :—

“‘As you are not of my parish,’ said a gentleman to a begging sailor, ‘I cannot think of relieving you.’ ‘Sir,’ replied the tar with an air of heroism, ‘I lost my leg fighting for *all* parishes.’”

This is dated August 1841, and certainly shows some increased degree of facility in putting a couple of figures together so as to form a group and tell a story.

It must have been, I think, just before Dante Rossetti left school that he began learning German. He learned it well up to a certain point, yet not so as to read freely ; and I suppose that, by the age of twenty-five to thirty, he may have forgotten four-fifths of what he had acquired. One day Dr. Adolf Heimann, the Professor of German at University College, presented himself in our house, saying that he wished to learn Italian from our father, and would be prepared in recompense to teach German to the four children. He was a German-Jew, an excellent little man of considerable acquirements, and as kind-hearted, open, genial a person as any one could wish to know. The arrangement was assented to ; and Dante, with the rest of us, set to at German, learning the grammar and pronunciation, reading the *Sagen und Märchen* (folk-stories), some easy things in Schiller, etc. For several years after this date—or up to 1848 or thereabouts—we saw more of the Heimann family than of any other. The Doctor married towards 1843, and soon there were children in his house.

## IX.

*STUDY FOR THE PAINTING PROFESSION—CARY'S AND THE R.A.*

DANTE ROSSETTI now—summer of 1842—craved to launch into the definite study of pictorial art. Of ordinary schooling he supposed himself to have had about as much as would serve his turn. Our father's health was already so far broken as to give cause for serious anxiety ; he therefore concurred with Dante in holding that the sooner artistic studies were undertaken the better. My brother did not return to King's College School after the summer vacation, but looked out for an Academy of Art.

Gabriele Rossetti had known the Rev. Mr. Cary, the translator of Dante, whose son, F. S. Cary, a painter of no great mark, kept at this time that well-reputed drawing academy which was termed "Sass's," in Bloomsbury Street, Bedford Square. To this institution my brother betook himself—perhaps as soon as he left King's College School, but at all events not long afterwards. Our father's acquaintance in the world of art was far from extensive. He knew pretty well Mr. Eastlake, afterwards Sir Charles Eastlake, P.R.A., Mr. Severn the friend of Keats, and Mr. and Mrs. Bartholomew the flower-painters ; he also saw once or twice John Martin, and Mr. Solomon Hart, R.A., but this latter may have been at a date rather after that of which I am now speaking. These appear to have been all.

Of what my brother did at Cary's, and whom he knew there, I can give but a meagre account ; his Family-letters throw a little, but only a little, light on the subject. He and I were still always together in the evening ; but in the day, while he was at the drawing academy, I continued in attendance at King's College School, up to February 1845, and then I went to the Excise Office in Old Broad Street. He drew from the antique and the skeleton, with immense liking for the profession of art, but with only moderate interest in

these preliminaries. He also studied anatomy in some books, but never, I think, in the actual subject, human or animal. Of his class-fellows we saw little. I can vaguely recollect Sintzenich, a youth whose sympathies were shared between painting and music, and who finally took to the latter. There was also a youth named Thomas Doughty, son of a self-taught American Landscape-painter, who had come over to London in quest of fortune, which did not smile upon him. I cannot say with certainty that the younger Doughty was a student at Cary's rather than the Royal Academy, but I am pretty sure that so he was. For a year or two he was my brother's chief intimate. I have not unfrequently accompanied Dante to drink tea and spend the evening in the house of the Doughtys, a small semi-villa residence close to Gloucester Gate, Regent's Park. The father was a rather convivial plain-spoken man; the mother a pleasant bright-mannered little lady, who had, I dare say, more than enough of domestic disquietude. The intimacy with young Doughty may have begun early in 1846, and, lasting throughout 1847, was brought to a close by the return of the family to America—presumably before the middle of 1848. We saw them off on their ship. Thomas Doughty must have been two years or more older than my brother, and had seen a good deal more of "life." I recollect he introduced us to two odd characters. One was a semi-artistic working shoemaker, living near Westminster Bridge. The other was a quick-witted lively young American, Charley Ware, leading a harum-scarum kind of life in lodgings off Leicester Square. I will not here tread rashly into his domestic penetralia. He had literary likings, much concerned with Edgar Poe, which was a bond of sympathy with my brother; and he was the first person to reveal to the latter the glories of Bailey's *Festus* (which Dante read over and over again for a while) by reciting the sublime opening—

"Eternity hath snowed its years upon them;  
And the white winter of their age is come,  
The world and all its worlds, and all shall end."

Charley Ware had some hankerings also after pictorial art, without any training. He produced a little oil-picture of a queer kind. I would give something to see it now, but presume it has long since "ended" among the "world and all its worlds." It represented the Devil, with Ware himself, Doughty, and Dante Gabriel; possibly one or two others. They were either playing whist at Ware's lodgings, or enjoying a light symposium. Each head was a tolerably characteristic likeness. Mr. Ware returned to America, perhaps before the Doughtys. I have often been rather surprised that, in all my miscellaneous readings, I never came across the name of him as doing something or other—for his sharpness of faculty was a good deal beyond the average. Thomas Doughty, I believe, remained in America quite undistinguished. I take him to be dead for many years past.

It may have been through the Doughty connexion that my brother got to see, in an American journal, a little copy of verses whose monumental imbecility delighted him beyond measure. It is named *The Atheist*, by *Flora McIver*. Often and to many an auditor have I heard my brother repeat *The Atheist*, and I suppose he could have done so to his dying day. "The idea," he would say, "of a confirmed Atheist who has never yet considered whether or not a flower was made by a God!" I am tempted to extract the poem here; it may perhaps again excite some of that glee with which I have often seen it greeted aforetime.

"The Atheist in his garden stood  
At twilight's pensive hour;  
His little daughter by his side  
Was gazing on a flower.

"'Oh pick that blossom, Pa, for me,'  
The little prattler said;  
'It is the fairest one that blooms  
Within that lowly bed.'

"The father plucked the chosen flower,  
And gave it to his child;  
With parted lips and sparkling eye  
She seized the gift, and smiled.

- “ ‘Oh Pa, who made this pretty flower,  
 This little violet blue?  
 Who gave it such a fragrant smell  
 And such a lovely hue?’ ”
- “ A change came o’er the father’s brow,  
 His eye grew strangely wild;  
 New thoughts within him had been stirred  
 By that sweet artless child.
- “ The truth flashed on the father’s mind,  
 The truth in all its power;  
 ‘There is a God, my child,’ he said,  
 ‘Who made that little flower.’ ”

This matter of Thomas Doughty and his circle has led me somewhat out of my track of date. I now return to the days of Cary’s Academy, which lasted for my brother from about July 1842 to July 1846. As to what he did there I am unable to distinguish much between the earlier and the later years. In Mrs. Esther Wood’s book, *Dante Rossetti and the Præ-raphaelite Movement* (1894),<sup>1</sup> some anecdotes are given upon the authority of a fellow-student, Mr. J. A. Vinter. They speak of waywardness as a pupil, irregular attendance, “a certain brusquerie and unapproachableness of bearing,” combined with warm affection and generosity, fondness for practical jokes, boisterous hilarity, loud singing, especially of a song about Alice Gray, the sketching of caricatures of antiques, and attractive outlining produced by a process contrary to his master’s precepts. Some of these points I know, and others I readily surmise, to be correct; am not however so sure about “practical jokes.” A practical joke played off by one young student upon another is usually something

<sup>1</sup> This book has been loudly and widely praised, and also severely criticized. It is very laudatory of Rossetti, a fact which I cannot view without some favourable bias towards the book. In other respects I may perhaps be permitted to say that Mrs. Wood, having commendably lofty ideals and ideas of her own, reads these (in my opinion) far too freely into the performances of the so-called Præraphaelite painters and poets, and has not much notion of the sort of thing that comes uppermost with a painter when he sets to work.

which either mortifies the victim, or traverses his work in a troublesome and annoying way ; and to jokes of this sort I should say that Dante Rossetti was not at any time given, but rather noticeable for shunning and censuring them. However, Mr. Vinter ought to know best, and I am sure that he does not mean to lead to any mistaken inference ; moreover, one practical joke is clearly traceable in my Letter B. 8. At home my brother never played any such jokes ; neither was he addicted to them at school, nor in the slightest degree at any period of his fully adult life. For singing he had naturally a more than tolerable voice ; but, apart from mere juvenile outbursts, he never cared to use it, still less to train it, and was even put out if the subject was alluded to.

One of the principal anecdotes developes the following dialogue. *Cary* : Why were you not here yesterday ? *Rossetti* : I had a fit of idleness—this reply being succeeded by the distribution among the students of “ a bundle of manuscript sonnets.” Mr. Vinter (or else Mrs. Wood) assumes that these sonnets were juvenile affairs, which Rossetti, at a later date, would have been sorry to see forthcoming. To the best of my recollection, Rossetti, up to July 1846 when he left Cary’s, did not produce any sonnets of his own—unless *possibly* (and even these seem to me to have begun rather later) sonnets written to *bouts rimés*, of which at one period he rattled off a very large number. The Vinter sonnets may perhaps have been some of his translations from Dante and other Italian poets ; these commenced as early as 1845. They were, from the first, good work—indeed excellent work—of which he would not at any date have been ashamed ; although it is true that at starting the youthful translator indulged in some mannerisms and quaintnesses which he corrected before the versions appeared in print in 1861.

Apart from the direct course of his studies, the greatest artistic event to Dante Rossetti during his time at Cary’s was the opening of the Exhibitions, at Westminster Hall, of Cartoons, prior to the pictorial decoration of the new Houses of Parliament. These displays took place in 1843, ’44, and ’45.

His letter of 7 July 1843 bears testimony to the extreme interest he took in the first of these Exhibitions ; the second was a still more marking event in his career, as it made known to him, by the Cartoons of *Wilhelmus Conquistator* (the Body of Harold brought to William of Normandy), and *Adam and Eve after the Fall*, the genius of Mr. Ford Madox Brown ; the third contained the Cartoon of *Justice* and some examples of fresco-painting by the same artist.<sup>1</sup> Rossetti also saw at an early date two of Brown's oil-pictures, *The Death-bed of the Giaour*, and *Parisina*.

In July 1846, having sent-in the requisite probation-drawings, Rossetti was admitted as a student in the Antique School of the Royal Academy, and Cary's knew him no more. Mr. George Jones, R.A., was the Keeper of the Antique School ; a rather aged painter, noted as resembling, on a feeble scale, the great Duke of Wellington, whose costume he imitated. Towards this date he chiefly exhibited sepia-drawings of scriptural or military subjects. A gradual and reasonable amount of progress was made in the Academy School, but only (I apprehend) on the same general lines as in the initial stages at Cary's ; in other words, Rossetti worked with a genuine sense of enthusiasm as to the end in view, but with something which might count as indifference and laxity with regard to the means dictated to him as conducing to that end. He once said to me—it may have been towards 1857 or later—“ As soon as a thing is imposed on me as an obligation, my aptitude for doing it is gone ; what I *ought* to do is what I *can't* do.” This went close to the essence of his character, and was true of him through life. As the years rolled on, what he ought to do was very often what he chose and liked to do, and then the difficulty vanished ; but in his student days it consisted in attending assiduously to matters for which, in themselves, he cared little or not at all, and a real obstruction was the result. As his gift for fine art was indisputably far superior to that of the great majority of his fellow-

<sup>1</sup> I believe I am correct as to these several dates ; far wrong I cannot be.

students, and as his drawings from the antique etc. were (I presume) in reasonable proportion to his gift, I know of no reason why he did not rapidly complete his course in the Antique School, and proceed to the Life and the Painting Schools—which he never did—except this same:—That the obligation which lay upon him was to fag over the antique and cognate first steps in art, and that, being obliged, he found the will to be lacking. A resolute sense of duty, firm faith in his instructors, and a disposition to do what was wanted in the same way as other people, might have furnished the will. But all these qualities were also at that time lacking, or present in a scanty degree. He liked to do what he himself chose, and, even if he did what some one else prescribed, he liked to do that more or less in his own way.

We are now approaching, though we have not yet reached, the period when the “Præraphaelite idea” developed itself in the minds of three Academy students—John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt, each of whom had already exhibited some pictures of his own, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who had not exhibited. It will be well therefore that I should guide my narrative of Rossetti’s student-days, as far as manageable, by the details published by Mr. Hunt, and also by another of the original Præraphaelites, Mr. Stephens.<sup>1</sup> Rossetti preceded Hunt as an Academy student. Up to May 1848, as Mr. Hunt says,—

“I had only been on nodding-terms with him in the school. He had always a following of noisy students there, and these had kept me from approaching him with more than a nod, except when once I found him perched on some steps drawing Ghiberti, whom I also studied; that nobody else did so had given us subject for five minutes’ talk.”

The statement that Rossetti was “drawing Ghiberti”

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hunt’s contribution consists of three articles in *The Contemporary Review* for 1886, *The Præraphaelite Brotherhood*. Mr. Stephens’s monograph has been already referred to. Mr. Hunt has also published an able article *Præraphaelitism*, in *Chambers’s Encyclopædia*.

means, of course, that he was drawing from a cast of the famous Florentine bronze doors, Ghiberti's work in the early fifteenth century. I remember that he used to speak to me with great fervency of the grace of motive, the abundance of artistic invention, and the fine handling, of the doors; and Mr. Hunt's statement on this small point is of substantial interest, as showing that both he and Rossetti had gravitated towards this mediæval work at a date possibly a full year before Præraphælitism took any sort of definite shape.

I will also extract (with a few comments) Mr. Hunt's description of Rossetti's person and manner. It is better—at any rate, in some respects—than any which I could supply, and will moreover be more readily believed in by the public.

"A young man of decidedly foreign aspect, about 5 feet 7 $\frac{1}{4}$  in height, with long brown hair touching his shoulders [this is strongly shown in the pencil drawing by Rossetti now in the National Portrait Gallery, but it did not continue long], not taking care to walk erect, but rolling carelessly as he slouched along, pouting with parted lips, staring with dreaming eyes—the pupils not reaching the bottom lids—grey eyes, not looking directly at any point, but gazing listlessly about; the openings large and oval, the lower orbits dark-coloured. His nose was aquiline but delicate, with a depression from the frontal sinus shaping the bridge [a very observable point]; the nostrils full, the brow rounded and prominent, and the line of the jaw angular and marked, while still uncovered with beard [the angularity departed or diminished with advancing years]. His shoulders were not square, but yet fairly masculine in shape. The singularity of gait depended upon the width of hip, which was unusual. Altogether he was a lightly built man [later on he was often decidedly but varyingly fat], with delicate hands and feet: although neither weak nor fragile in constitution, he was nevertheless altogether unaffected by any athletic exercises. He was careless in his dress, which then was, as usual with professional men, black and of evening cut [this matter of black evening dress altered very soon; and indeed, from 1851 or thereabouts, my brother ceased to be, in any noticeable way, careless or odd in attire, and at times was even rather particular about it]. So superior

was he to the ordinary vanities of young men that he would allow the spots of mud to remain dry on his legs for several days. His overcoat was brown, and not put on with ordinary attention; and, with his pushing stride and loud voice [I feel some doubt as to the *loud* voice—should call it emphatic and full-toned rather than loud], a special scrutiny would have been needed to discern the reserved tenderness that dwelt in the breast of the apparently careless and defiant youth. But any one who approached and addressed him was struck with sudden surprise to find all his critical impressions dissipated in a moment; for the language of the painter was refined and polished, and he proved to be courteous, gentle, and winsome, generous in compliment, rich in interest in the pursuit of others, and in every respect, so far as could be shown by manner, a cultivated gentleman. . . . In these early days, with all his headstrongness and a certain want of consideration, his life within was untainted to an exemplary degree, and he worthily rejoiced in the poetic atmosphere of the sacred and spiritual dreams that then encircled him, however some of his noisy demonstrations at the time might hinder this from being recognized by a hasty judgment."

Mr. Stephens, quoting from "a fellow-student," says that—

"Fame of a sort had preceded" Rossetti from Cary's to the Academy School. Other Caryites had talked of him "as a poet whose verses had been actually printed [this can only mean *Sir Hugh the Heron*], and as a clever sketcher of chivalric and satiric subjects, who in addition did all sorts of things in all sorts of unconventional ways. His rather high cheek-bones were the more observable because his cheeks were roseless and hollow enough to indicate the waste of life and midnight oil to which the youth was addicted." He, on his first appearance in the Academy School, "came forward among his fellows with a jerky step, tossed the falling hair back from his face, and, having both hands in his pockets, faced the student-world with an *insouciant* air which savoured of defiance, mental pride, and thorough self-reliance."

The reference here to "waste of midnight oil" is quite true. My brother had already acquired habits, which stuck to him through life, of not going to bed until he happened to be so disposed, often at two or three in the morning, and

of not getting up until necessity compelled or fancy suggested. "Always wilful, never methodical, and the consequences to take care of themselves," might have been his motto. It is true, however, that in mature life he settled down into habits of the utmost day-by-day regularity in professional work.

Rossetti went a great deal to the theatre towards 1845, and for some six or seven years ensuing, and again about 1861; little at other dates, and after 1868 or so not at all. He liked—in its way—almost any theatre, and almost any piece that was either genuinely poetical, or exciting, or entertaining; nothing of a dull or stuck-up kind. Miss Woolgar (Mrs Mellon) at the Adelphi, and afterwards Miss Glyn at Sadler's Wells, were two of his favourite actresses. If Shakespear or John Webster was not "going," an Adelphi drama by Buckstone or a burlesque of the Forty Thieves would do perfectly well. He was also much amused at thoroughly *bad* drama and acting, such as could be seen at the Queen's Theatre near Tottenham Court Road (afterwards Prince of Wales's Theatre).

## X.

### STUDENT-LIFE—SKETCHING, READING, AND WRITING.

AS we have just seen, Dante Rossetti was known at Cary's Academy for sketching "chivalric and satiric subjects." There must have been great numbers of these, proper both to the Cary period and to the Royal Academy period. Possibly some still exist, in the hands of his companions of those days; I myself know of but few. There is nothing in them tending to what we call Præraphaelitism.

The early letters of Rossetti show that no artist delighted him more intensely than Gavarni (Guillaume Sulpice Chevalier), the French designer for lithographs and woodcuts. Among his series are *Les Artistes*, *Les Coulisses*, *Le Carnaval*, *Les Enfants Terribles*, *Les Étudiants de Paris*, *Les Lorettes*, *Fourberies de Femmes en matière de Sentiment* etc. He was a designer of supreme facility, with much of elegance and

*esprit*, and in his way a master ; but naturally the way does not tend towards anything castigated or ideal. It will be observed in the Letters that in 1843 and 1844 my brother spent some time in Boulogne with the Maenza family. This served to fix his attention still further upon Gavarni and other French designers of a vivacious and picturesque kind ; though not wholly to the exclusion of British artists, among whom he greatly (and indeed permanently) admired Sir John Gilbert as a woodcut-draughtsman, and soon afterwards as a painter. In some pen-and-ink designs by Dante Rossetti, of the close of 1844 and on to September 1846, I trace much of what he saw in Gavarni, and tried to reproduce in his own practice. They are sketchy, and rather rough or unrefined in execution, but not wanting in spirit—the work now of an artist, though only of an artist at the beginning of his career. One is termed *Quartier Latin, the Modern Raphael and his Fornarina*. To April 1846 belongs a half-figure of Mephistopheles at the door of Gretchen's cell. The malignant expression is telling. Undated, but belonging I suppose to 1847, is a drawing, clever in its way, of a man seated, and reaching towards a flitting ghost ; two other figures are evidently unconscious of the apparition. *Lady Anne Bothwell's Lament*, from *Percy's Reliques*, is a drawing, not fully completed, of some sentiment and some picturesqueness. At one time, I suppose 1845, he tried his hand at lithographing, and produced a figure of Juliette, from Frédéric Soulié's novel (a prime favourite with him in these days) *Les Mémoires du Diable*. This is poor enough, yet not destitute of a certain *chique*. He also lithographed a set of humorous playing-cards—Ireland as the Queen of Clubs, Shakespear as the King of Hearts, Death as the King of Spades, etc. They have some fancy and point, with pleasing arrangement here and there, and might perhaps have been popular if published. He thought of trying for a publisher, but I doubt whether he ever took any practical steps for this end. Death is represented as a Grave-digger, wearing a pair of baggy breeches, and standing in a grave. One sees only a part of

his leg-bones. These may perhaps be meant for his thigh-bones ; but it seems quite as likely that they are intended for the bones of the lower leg. If so, it is worthy of remark that Rossetti gave this skeleton only one bone to each of his lower legs, instead of the normal two, and his anatomical knowledge could thus have been small indeed towards 1845. Strange to say, Holbein, in his *Dance of Death*, knew no better. Of more present interest is an illustrated copy of the little privately-printed volume, *Verses by Christina G. Rossetti*, 1847. I possess the copy of this volume bearing the inscriptions, "Frances Mary Lavinia Rossetti, from her loving daughter Christina, 24 July 1854," and then "Fratrī Soror, C.G.R., Sept. 25, 1890" (my sixty-first birthday). It contains five pencil drawings by Dante, all of them produced, I should say, before the year 1847 had closed. The frontispiece is a profile portrait of Christina, carefully and delicately done. The illustrations are to the poems, *A Ruined Cross*, *Tasso and Leonora*, *The Dream*, and *Lady Isabella* (who was Lady Isabella Howard, a daughter of the Earl of Wicklow, and a pupil of our Aunt Charlotte Polidori). These designs, though inferior to the portrait, are also handled with nicety and good taste. The last-named must have been produced a little later than the others, as it is not bound into the volume. A noteworthy point about the designs is the total absence of any feeling for costume. There are clothes, but of that nondescript kind which, in the male figures, is evidenced by little more than a slight line at the throat, and two others at the wrists. Tasso and Leonora might be anybody or nobody.

Before Præraphaelitism came at all into question my brother began an oil-picture of good dimensions. It was named *Retro me Sathana*, and formed a group of three mediæval-costumed figures—an aged churchman and a youthful lady, and the devil slinking behind them baffled. He was a human being with a tail. This must have been undertaken in 1847, when my brother had no practice with pigments, and was continued for some three or four months. It was not, I

apprehend, altogether amiss ; at what date it was destroyed I hardly know. He had begun the colouring, and showed the work privately to Sir Charles Eastlake, who did not encourage him to proceed with any such subject. Soon after this it was abandoned.

Rossetti's taste for reading, in all the days of his youth, was never stationary ; it continued shifting and developing. Having drunk deep of one author, he went on to another. In 1844 some one told him that there was another poet of the Byronic epoch, Shelley, even greater than Byron. He bought a small pirated Shelley, and surged through its pages like a flame. I do not think that he ever afterwards read much of Byron ; although, as his mind matured, he was not inclined to allow that the poet of such an actuality as *Don Juan* could be deemed inferior to the poet of such a vision as *Prometheus Unbound*. (Not indeed that he *approved* of *Don Juan*, as regards the spirit in which it is written. Early in 1880 he went so far as to tell me that he considered it a truly immoral and harmful book.) Keats followed not long after Shelley, in 1846, or perhaps 1845. My brother considered himself to have been one of the earliest strenuous admirers of Keats, but this can only be correct in a certain sense. The Old British Ballads and Mrs. Browning were read with endless enjoyment ; also Alfred de Musset (I have previously mentioned Victor Hugo), Dumas (dramas, and afterwards novels), Tennyson, Edgar Poe, Coleridge, Blake, Sir Henry Taylor's *Philip van Artevelde*, Thomas Hood—more especially some of his serious poems, such as *Lycus the Centaur* and *The Haunted House*, and the semi-serious *Miss Killmansegg and her Precious Leg*, though some of his roaring jocularities were also much in favour. As to Dr. Hake's nebulous but impressive romance, *Vates*, some details will appear elsewhere. Hoffmann's *Contes Fantastiques* (in French), and in English Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihl*, and Lamotte-Fouqué's *Undine* and other stories, represented the Teutonic element in romance and legend. It may have been towards 1846 that my brother came upon the prose *Stories after Nature* of Charles Wells, and his poetic

drama of *Joseph and his Brethren*. These works, already half-forgotten at that date, were enormously admired by Rossetti, and the ultimate outcome of his admiration, transfused through the potent faculty and pen of Mr. Swinburne, was the republication of the drama about 1877. Earlier than most of these—beginning, I suppose, in 1844—was the Irish romancist Maturin, who held Dante Rossetti spellbound with the gloomy and thrilling horrors of *Melmoth the Wanderer*. He and I used often to sit far into the night reading the pages one over the other's shoulder; and, if to stir the imagination of an imaginative youth is one aim of such a romance as *Melmoth*, no author can ever have succeeded more manifestly than Maturin with Dante Rossetti. There was another grim romance of his, named *Montorio*, which we thought a splendid pendant to *Melmoth*; not to speak of *Women*, *The Wild Irish Boy*, and *The Albigenses*; Maturin's once-celebrated verse-drama of *Bertram*, and some other poems of his, were eagerly inspected, but without any genuine result to correspond. Two other English novels which he read in these years with keen enjoyment were the *Tristram Shandy* of Sterne, and the *Richard Savage* of Charles Whitehead; and in French, by Reybaud, *Jérôme Paturot à la recherche d'une Position Sociale*, and, by Eugène Sue, the *Mystères de Paris*, the *Juif Errant*, and *Mathilde*. In Dickens my brother's interest may have been on the wane when *Dombey and Son* began in 1846, though I suppose he also read *David Copperfield*, 1849. In his last days he was much struck with the *Tale of Two Cities*. To Dickens succeeded Thackeray, who was most highly appreciated: his early tales in *Fraser's Magazine*, such as *Fitzboodle's Confessions* and *Barry Lyndon*, and *The Paris Sketchbook* (even before *Vanity Fair* appeared in 1846), also *The Book of Snobs*. Later on, a novel ascribed to Lady Malet, *Violet or the Danseuse*, was a great favourite; and he had a positive passion for Meinhold's wondrous *Sidonia the Sorceress* (translated), which he much preferred to the *Amber Witch* of the same phenomenal author.

At last—it may have been in 1847—everything took a

secondary place in comparison with Robert Browning. *Paracelsus*, *Sordello*, *Pippa Passes*, *The Blot on the Scutcheon*, and the short poems in the *Bells and Pomegranates* series, were endless delights; endless were the readings, and endless the recitations. Allowing for a labyrinthine passage here and there, Rossetti never seemed to find this poet difficult to understand; he discerned in him plenty of sonorous rhythmical effect, and revelled in what, to some other readers, was mere crabbedness. Confronted with Browning, all else seemed pale and in neutral tint. Here were passion, observation, aspiration, mediævalism, the dramatic perception of character, act, and incident. In short, if at this date Rossetti had been accomplished in the art of painting, he would have carried out in that art very much the same range of subject and treatment which he found in Browning's poetry; and it speaks something for his originality and self-respecting independence that, when it came to verse-writing, he never based himself upon Browning to any appreciable extent, and for the most part pursued a wholly diverse path. It should not be supposed that, in glorifying Browning, Rossetti slighted other poets previously the objects of his homage. He valued them at the same rate as before, though he thought Browning a step further in advance. I need scarcely add that Shakespear and Dante are to be excepted, for at no time would he have denied or contested the superiority of these, even to the poet of *Sordello*. The time of Dante had come some three years before that of Browning began, and the current of Rossetti's love for the Florentine flowed wider and deeper month by month.

It may be noted that (as in a previous instance) I have not specified any books of a so-called solid kind—history, biography, or voyages. Science and metaphysics were totally out of Rossetti's ken. I do not believe that he read any such books at this period—very few at any later period, among the few *Boswell's Johnson* holding a high place. In current talk Rossetti did not appear to be much behind other persons when history or biography was referred to; but I hardly

know what historical volumes he opened, other than Carlyle's *French Revolution*, Merivale's *Roman Empire*, and something of Plutarch and of Gibbon. The great Duke of Marlborough's English History came out of Shakespear's plays; Rossetti's English and other history derived largely from the same source, supplemented by those adust chroniclers, Walter Scott, Bulwer, Victor Hugo, and Dumas. This was not to our father's liking. I have more than once heard him say, "When you have read a novel of Walter Scott, what do you know? The fancies of Walter Scott."

Rossetti had commenced some prose story before he left King's College School in the summer of 1842. I am not certain whether that story was or was not the same thing as *Sorrentino*. At any rate, a prose tale named *Sorrentino* was in course of composition in August 1843. I remember something of it, but not in clear detail. The Devil (a personage of great predilection with my brother ever since his early acquaintance with Göthe's *Faust*, which drama he read and re-read afterwards in Filmore's translation) was a principal character. There was a love-story, in the course of which the Devil interfered in a very exasperating way between the lover and his fair one. He either personated the lover, or conjured-up a phantom of the lady, and made love to her, and was seen by the lover in the act—or something of this kind. There was also a duel in which he intermixed. Rossetti wrote some four or five chapters of this story, on the scale of chapters in an ordinary novel, and he contemplated offering *Sorrentino* for publication. Finally he abandoned it, and I dare say he had destroyed the MS. before he was of age. I have always rather regretted the disappearance of *Sorrentino*. To my boyish notion, it was spirited, effective, and well told; and I fancy that, were it extant, it would be found by far better than his previous small literary attempts. That he entered fully into the spirit of a story of *diablerie* is certain; and, having by this time some moderate command over his pen, he may have been not incapable of doing something in that line himself.

His next literary incentive arose out of his German studies—which began, as already mentioned, towards the earlier part of 1842. Dr. Heimann brought him so far on in German that Dante Rossetti made a verse-translation of Bürger's *Lenore*, perhaps in 1844. This likewise has perished. I suppose it was much on a par with most other versions of the ballad. I can recollect two stanzas (and might, were there a little prompting, recollect others as well), one close to the beginning of the poem, and the other at its end:—

"The Empress and the King,  
With ceaseless quarrel tired,  
At length relaxed the stubborn hate  
Which rivalry inspired."

And

"Patience, patience, while thy heart is breaking—  
With thy God there is no question-making;  
Of thy body thou art quit and free—  
Heaven keep thy soul eternally!"

From *Lenore* he proceeded to a more ambitious adventure—no less than a translation of the *Nibelungenlied*. This mighty old poem seized hold upon him with a vice-like clench; yet I do not suppose he ever read the whole of it, his knowledge of German, unaided, being hardly sufficient for such an effort. Neureuther's illustrated edition, combined with Dr. Heimann's explanations, showed him the course of the narrative. The translation was begun in October 1845, and went on to the end of the 5th Geste, or thereabouts, where Siegfried first sees Kriemhild. No trace of it remains. Speaking from long-past memory, I should say that this was really a fine translation, with rolling march and a sense of the heroic. The merits of the next translation are not matter of conjecture, for it got finally printed in Rossetti's *Collected Works*, 1886. It is from the *Arme Heinrich* of the twelfth-century poet Hartmann von Aue, and belongs probably to the year 1846. For simplicity, vigour, perception of the character of the original, and tact in conveying this along

with a certain heightened and spontaneous colouring of his own, this version could not easily be excelled. My brother put some finishing touches to the translation in 1871. Probably he cut out some juvenilities, but it remains substantially and essentially the performance of his adolescence.

Even before the *Arme Heinrich* Rossetti's translations from the early Italian poets must have begun. The dates of most of these range from 1845 to 1849. Glowing from the flame-breath of Dante Alighieri, Dante Rossetti made continual incursions into the Old Reading-room of the British Museum, hunting up volumes of the most ancient Italian lyrists, and also volumes of modern British poets, and maybe of French as well. No doubt this pursuit involved some partial neglect of his artistic studies. When he found an Italian poem that pleased him he set-to at translating it. He had soon got together a good deal of material, and gradually the idea of collecting all into a book, including a version of Dante's *Vita Nuova*, grew into shape. Almost all the translations from Dante may have been done at home, where of course the youth had ready access to his writings, and to those of several other old Italians. I cannot say which branch of the subject may have been undertaken first; possibly the version of the *Vita Nuova*, prose and poetry, had been made before any researches at the British Museum commenced. This version was shown in November 1850 to Tennyson, with whom my brother and others of our circle had made some acquaintance through Mr. Coventry Patmore. He returned the MS., saying that it was very strong and earnest, but disfigured by some cockney rhymes, such as "calm" and "arm." Rossetti at once determined to remove these. The book of *The Early Italian Poets* did not appear in print until 1861, and meanwhile my brother had often gone over his first MSS., revising, improving, and suppressing crudities or quaintnesses. Still (as in the case of the *Arme Heinrich*) the published translations are, in main essentials, the same which Rossetti wrote down in these juvenile years—the impulse and the savour of them are the same; and any praise

deserved by and awarded to the man who issued the book in 1861 appertains rightfully to the youth who worked upon it in 1845 and the few following years. The translations have been very generally recognized as first-class work of their order—re-castings of poems into another language such as could only be accomplished by a poet in his own right. Instead of expressing any opinion of my own, I will reproduce two verdicts by writers of exceptional competence from their respective standpoints. Mr. Swinburne, the most lavishly generous of critics when he finds something that he can have the luxury of praising, says in that review of the *Poems* of Rossetti which he published in 1870: "All Mr. Rossetti's translations bear the same evidence of a power not merely beyond reach but beyond attempt of other artists in language." My other authority is Signor Carlo Placci of Florence, who, immediately after Rossetti's death in 1882, produced a brochure entitled *Dante Gabriele Rossetti*. The testimony of a native Italian well versed in English may carry with it a weight hardly inferior to that of the greatest contemporary master of English verse. I quote it with the more pleasure as it does justice also to Mr. Swinburne's own powers as a translator:—

"The collection of the Poets of Italy of the first centuries is a work undoubtedly extraordinary. The diverse styles, the opposite turns of sentiment, the various and complicated forms, the difficult allegories, the intricate rhymes, all is rendered in a surprising way; and the very spirit of our language seems reflected, with all its poetry and its pictorial aspect, in these translations—which certainly do not yield to the best version of a foreign poet done in our days, I mean that of Villon executed by Swinburne. Like him, Rossetti has been able not only to enter into that life so different from the English, and steal the spark proper to another idiom, in such wise as to astound even those who know the original thoroughly; but, preserving all the grace and elegance and candour of his model, he has sought, and successfully, to re-fashion, without visible effort, their metres and repeated rhymes, and all the devices of alliteration, assonance, and repetition, which are certainly not less difficult in

the *canzoni* of our thirteenth-century men than in the daring *ballades* of François Villon. In the case of both poets this has been not merely a masterpiece, but a true struggle crowned with success, especially when we reflect on the intrinsic difference which exists between the Teutonic and the Latin families of language."

Not as a translator only but also as an original poet, Rossetti's faculty was fully developed by 1847. One proof of this suffices—that he wrote *The Blessed Damozel* before 12 May of that year, or while still in the nineteenth year of his age. By saying that his faculty was now fully developed, I do not mean to imply that it did not afterwards ripen—which assuredly it did—in several important respects; but that he had now ideas of a memorable kind to express, and could and did express them in verse wholly adequate for their embodiment. He meant something good—he knew what he meant—and he knew how to convey it to others. *The Blessed Damozel* was written with a view to its insertion in a MS. Family-magazine, of brief vitality. In 1881 Rossetti gave Mr. Caine an account of its origin, as deriving from his perusal and admiration of Edgar Poe's *Raven*. "I saw" (this is Mr. Caine's version of Rossetti's statement) "that Poe had done the utmost it was possible to do with the grief of the lover on earth, and I determined to reverse the conditions, and give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in heaven." Along with *The Raven*, other poems by Poe—*Ulalume*, *For Annie*, *The Haunted Palace*, and many another—were a deep well of delight to Rossetti in all these years. He once wrote a parody of *Ulalume*. I do not rightly remember it, nor has it left a vestige behind.

The poem named *My Sister's Sleep* was, I think, even earlier than *The Blessed Damozel*; *The Portrait* and *Ave* very little later, also all the opening portion of *Dante at Verona*, *A Last Confession*, and *The Bride's Prelude*. *Jenny* (in its first form, which had none of that slight framework of incident now belonging to the poem) was begun almost as soon as *The Blessed Damozel*; only some fifty lines of the original draft are retained. The sonnet *Retro me Sathana*

must belong to 1847, being intended to pair with his picture of the same name ; and the trio of sonnets named *The Choice* appertain to the same year, or perhaps to an early date in 1848. This trio is important, as indicating Rossetti's youthful conception of life as a moral discipline and problem. He propounds three theories—1, Eat thou and drink, to-morrow thou shalt die ; 2, Watch thou and pray ; 3, Think thou and act. Each sonnet exhibits its own theme, without any direct reference to the themes of the other two. It is manifest, however, that Rossetti intends us to set aside the "Eat thou and drink" theory of life, and not to accept, without much reservation, the "Watch thou and pray" theory. "Think thou and act" is what he abides by.

There was another very early poem, begun perhaps in 1846 rather than 1847, and nearly completed at the time. It then remained wholly neglected, until, on his deathbed, my brother took it up, and supplied the finishing touches. Its final name is *Jan van Hunks*. For this long ballad-poem Rossetti found his main subject (but by no means all his incidents) in a prose story, *Henkerwoyssel's Challenge*, printed in his old favourite, the *Tales of Chivalry*. The ballad relates how a Dutchman, celebrated for his prowess in smoking, treated certain members of his family with callous cruelty, and was then challenged by the Devil in human form to engage in a smoking-duel. Of course the Devil's capabilities at such an exercise exceeded even the Dutchman's ; so Van Hunks, dying of over-smoking, was marched off to hell, where his carcass was converted into a pipe for the devil's accustomed use. The ballad is humorously grim, treated with great force and no compromise, and is a pleasant piece of unpleasant reading. It is most fully deserving of publication ; but has not been included in Rossetti's *Collected Works*, because he gave the MS. to his devoted friend Mr. Theodore Watts, with whom alone now rests the decision of presenting it or not to the public.

I may mention yet another "copy of verses," belonging to March 1848. It is named *The English Revolution of 1848*,

and ridicules the street-spoutings of Chartists and others in that year of vast continental upheavals. It is more than tolerably good in its burlesque way, but is not likely to be published. My brother had some feeling for political ideals and great movements, but none, except one of annoyance and disdain, for noise and bluster. It may well be that he did not always appreciate correctly the distinction between the noise and the ideals.

A small incident, of literary and artistic bearing, proved to be hardly less important in Rossetti's career than the composition of an original poem. He was already a hearty admirer of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. One day, while attending at the British Museum Reading-room on one of his ordinary errands, he received, from an attendant named Palmer, the offer of a MS. book by Blake, crammed with prose and verse, and with designs. This was in April 1847. The price asked was ten shillings. Dante's pockets were in their normal state of depletion, so he applied to me, urging that so brilliant an opportunity should not be let slip, and I produced the required coin. He then proceeded to copy out, across a confused tangle of false starts, alternative forms, and cancellings, all the poetry in the book, and I did the like for the prose. His ownership of this truly precious volume certainly stimulated in some degree his disregard or scorn of some aspects of art held in reverence by *dilettanti* and routine-students, and thus conduced to the Præraphaelite movement; for he found here the most outspoken (and no doubt, in a sense, the most irrational) epigrams and jeers against such painters as Correggio, Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt, Reynolds, and Gainsborough—any men whom Blake regarded as fulsomely florid, or lax, or swamping ideas in mere manipulation. These were balsam to Rossetti's soul, and grist to his mill. The volume was moreover the origin of all his after-concern in Blake literature; as Alexander Gilchrist, when preparing the *Life of Blake* published in 1863, got to hear of the MS. book, which my brother then entrusted to him, and, after Gilchrist's premature death, Rossetti did a

good deal towards completing certain parts of the biography, and in especial edited all the poems introduced into the second Section. He again did something for the re-edition dated 1880. At the sale of my brother's library and effects the Blake MS. sold for £110. 5s., so that the venture of ten shillings turned out a pretty good investment.

## XI.

*FRIENDS TOWARDS 1847*

BESIDES the families which I have already mentioned—Dr. Heimann and his wife, a very pretty pleasant young English Jewess, whose maiden name was Amelia Barnard, and the American Doughtys—Dante Rossetti knew, as he grew up towards manhood, two persons more particularly, of whom I ought here to give some account. They were Major Calder Campbell and Mr. William Bell Scott.

To Major Campbell Rossetti was, I think, introduced by an affectionate friend, a year or two older than himself, the sculptor Alexander Munro—an Inverness man who had come to London under the patronage of the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, and who, being ingenuous and agreeable in manner, and of graceful gift as a sculptor, made some way both in society and in art. He died abroad towards the beginning of 1871. Calder Campbell was a retired officer from the Indian army, a bachelor turned of fifty. He took to my brother most heartily; was a firm believer in his future, and watched with the kindest interest his actual stage of development. He was the author of a large number of verses, tales, and sketches, in *Annals* and other fleeting forms of publication, and from time to time produced a volume as well. To pretend that he was an author of high mark, or capable of something greatly better than what he gave forth, would be futile; but he was a lively writer in a minor way, an amusing chatty talker, who had seen many things here and there, and knew something of the publishing

world, and a straightforward, most unassuming gentleman, whose society could do nothing but good to a youth like Rossetti. For a couple of years or so my brother and I used to pass an evening weekly at his lodgings in University Street, Tottenham Court Road. Tea, literature, and a spice of bantering scandal, were the ingredients for a light-hearted and not unimproving colloquy. Mostly no one else was present. On one occasion—to please Dante Rossetti, who took a great deal of interest in a rather eccentric but certainly able volume of poems entitled *Studies of Sensation and Event*—Major Campbell secured the attendance of its author, Ebenezer Jones. He was a well-grown, thin, pale man, still young, with decayed teeth and a general air of shaky health, which brought him to his grave before many years had passed. He seemed pleased in a way, but without any ease of manner or flow of spirits. We never saw him again. Dante did not, however, lose his interest in Ebenezer Jones. As late as February 1870 he made some emphatic observations upon this poet in *Notes and Queries*; and his remarks led ultimately to a re-publication of the *Studies*, and to a good deal of printed matter about Jones in the *Athenæum*.

Rossetti was quite inclined now to make a little way in the literary world, if he could find an opening. Major Campbell was more than willing to assist him, and he showed *My Sister's Sleep* to the editress of the *Belle Assemblée*, a philandering magazine which had seen better days. The editress expressed great admiration of the poem, but did not publish it. Perhaps payment was wanted, and funds were at a low ebb. This may have been before the year 1848 was far advanced. I cannot recollect that my brother made any further endeavour for publication. Pretty soon *The Germ* was projected, and was to be the medium for introducing to the public the writings of himself and others.

Mr. Bell Scott has narrated (*Autobiographical Notes*) the origin of his acquaintance with Dante Rossetti. On 25 November 1847 the latter took the first step by sending to Mr. Scott, then Master of the Government School of

Design in Newcastle-on-Tyne, a letter of which the Autobiographer gives an abstract. I condense still further.

"A few years ago," said Rossetti, "I met for the first time, in a publication called *The Story-teller*, with your two poems, *Rosabell* and *A Dream of Love*. So beautiful, so original, did they appear to me, that I assure you I could think of little else for several days; and I became possessed by quite a troublesome anxiety to know what else you had written, and where it was to be found. Seeing that the two poems were extracted from *The Monthly Repository*, I went to the Museum, where I found a set of that magazine, but met only with a paper on Art. . . . At the beginning of the present year I fell in with a most inadequate paragraph, in the *Art-Union* Journal, which informed me of the publication of *The Year of the World*. I was about to bid you imagine my delight, but that would not be easy. I rushed from my friend's house where I had seen the announcement (for the wretched thing was no more), and, having got the book, fell upon it like a vulture. You may be pretty certain that you had in me one of those readers who read the volume at a single sitting. A finer, a more dignitous,<sup>1</sup> a more deeply thoughtful production, a work that is more truly a *work*, has seldom indeed shed its light upon me. To me I can truly say that it revealed

'Some depth unknown, some inner life unlived.'

This is the first line of *The Year of the World*.—Rossetti proceeded to say that he was aware of the existence of another poem by Scott named *Hades or the Transit*; and, being unable to light upon this or other works by the same author, he ventured to enquire at headquarters.

It may be questioned whether readers of the present day know very much about Mr. Scott's poems. I will therefore say a few words about *Rosabell* and *The Year of the World*. *Rosabell*—afterwards reissued under the name of *Mary Anne*—is a poem, in irregular form and various metres, about an innocent country-girl who becomes a gentleman's mistress,

<sup>1</sup> So in Mr. Scott's book. My brother was not fond of such strained or affected words, and was much more likely to write "dignified." Still I suppose that the printed word is correct, and that he was misled for a moment by the analogy of the Italian adjective *dignitoso*.

and finally sinks into the lowest depths of shame and destitution. Though deficient in some executive respects, it reads an impressive lesson in impressive and poignant terms, and deserves to live. *The Year of the World* is a much longer poem in blank verse. The subject extends (to use the author's own words) "from the golden age of the Garden of Eden, the period of instinct and innocence, to the end of the race, when, all the adverse powers of Nature subjugated, Man will have attained a happy and quiescent immortality." I have read this ambitious and remarkable poem several times, but not of late years. I will, however, undertake to say that it contains a large amount of strong thought mixed with ideal aspiration; that it comprises many lines of true poetry, and many passages of majestic scope; and that, if a reading public who do not greatly want such productions would consent to read the work, they would find in it much to reward their pains, and to uphold the claims of its author as a poet of a high standard, and of some veritable though not uniformly realized attainment. I do not coincide with some critics of the present day (and of past days as well) who hold that Scott's executive touch is so uncertain, and the instances where he falls short of his aim so numerous, as to disentitle him altogether to the name of poet. On the contrary, I can and do still admire his work to a large extent, although far from unconscious of its too frequently obvious, and sometimes almost unaccountable, blemishes.

Mr. Scott, now aged thirty-six, naturally had not the least idea who "Gabriel Charles Rossetti" might be, beyond what appeared in his letter as to his being a student of painting, etc. He made some sort of reply, and soon received a further letter enclosing a number of verse MSS., which included *The Blessed Damozel*, *My Sister's Sleep*, and (as Scott expresses it) "many other admirable poems, marshalled under the title of *Songs of the Art Catholic*." I hardly think that my brother had by this date completed "many" poems, unless translations are to be reckoned in. There may easily, however, have been a round half dozen of original composi-

tions, comprising, in all probability, *Ave*—also the beginnings of some others, such as *The Bride's Prelude* (which at this time was called *Bride-Chamber Talk*). My brother's general title of *Songs of the Art Catholic* is worth a moment's attention. By "Art" he decidedly meant something more than "*poetic art*." He meant to suggest that the poems embodied conceptions and a point of view related to pictorial art—also that this art was, in sentiment though not necessarily in dogma, Catholic—mediæval and un-modern. He never was, and never affected to be, a Roman-catholic, nor yet an Anglican-catholic. All the then excited debates concerning "Puseyism," Tractarianism, and afterwards Ritualism, passed by him like the idle wind. If he knew anything about "the Gorham Controversy," it was only that Carlyle coupled "prevenient grace" with "supervenient moonshine." Indeed, by this date—so far as opinion went, which is a very different thing from sentiment and traditional bias—he was already a decided sceptic. He was never confirmed, professed no religious faith, and practised no regular religious observances; but he had (more especially two or three years after this) sufficient sympathy with the abstract ideas and the venerable forms of Christianity to go occasionally to an Anglican church—very occasionally, and only as the inclination ruled him.

Not long after this letter-writing (I have already expressed the opinion that it was about the new year of 1848) Mr. Scott called in 50 Charlotte Street, and saw Dante and other members of the family. I well remember his first appearance, in the evening. He was then a handsome and highly impressive-looking man; of good stature, bony and well-developed but rather thin frame, pondering and somewhat melancholy air, and deliberate low-toned utterance. His hair (which he lost entirely some years afterwards) was blackish, and of free abundant growth, his eyebrows bushy, his eyes of a very pale clear blue. This hue must have been too cold and steely for a southern sympathy; for, when he and I were travelling in Italy in 1862, a Pisan female fellow-

traveller felt disconcerted under its influence, and whispered to me that he certainly had "the evil eye." We in Charlotte Street did not think so, but took very warmly indeed to Mr. Scott, and found him not only attractive but even fascinating.

Some time after he had written to Mr. Scott—it seems to have been in the summer of 1850—Dante Rossetti wrote likewise to Robert Browning. In the British Museum he had come across an anonymous poem entitled *Pauline*. He admired it much, and copied out every line of it. He observed one or two verses which he already knew in Browning's avowed poems. From this circumstance, and from general internal evidence, he came to the conclusion that the author of *Pauline* could be no other than Browning, and he wrote to the poet at a venture to enquire whether his inference was correct. Browning was at that time in Venice. He replied in the affirmative; and, being two years afterwards back in London, he made the acquaintance of Rossetti, who called upon him companioned by the poet William Allingham.

## XII.

### MADDOX BROWN, HOLMAN HUNT, MILLAIS.

A CERTAIN day in March 1848—I don't know *which* day—formed one of the most important landmarks in the career of Dante Rossetti. It was on that day that he wrote to Mr. Ford Maddox Brown, personally quite unknown to him, asking whether he could become Brown's pupil in the practical work of painting. He thus commenced the most intimate friendship of his life; and the letter led on to his familiar companionship with Holman Hunt, and hence to the Præraphæelite movement, and all subsequent developments of his art.

It may be questioned—Why did Rossetti look out for private instruction in painting, when he might, with moderate exertion, have advanced from the Antique School of the Royal Academy to the Life School and the Painting School, and might, in the last-named section, have obtained, from

accredited painters, all the training that he could want? My recollections on this point do not supply me with any very precise information. Some *data* are however clear enough to me. Few young men were more impetuous or more impatient than my brother, or more ambitious to boot. He had now been an art-student for nearly six years, and he wanted to be a student no longer, but a practising painter, testing by actual performance the faculty that was within him, and the recognition which the public might be willing or compelled to accord thereto. His study in the Academy's Antique School had not yet lasted two years. Fully as much might still be needed before he would get into the Painting School, and, when there, he might find little to respect in his instructors (for he had no belief in an R.A., merely as such), and little furtherance in that particular line of work which attracted him. He had plenty of ideas. What he needed was such an immediate knowledge of brush-work as would enable him to cover a canvas. I do not say—to cover it well or ill; for the idea of doing the thing ill would at this time, as at all others, have been most repugnant to him. He wanted to cover the canvas, and to do it as well as his utmost endeavour would permit. These considerations were amply sufficient to impel him to look out for a prompt training in painting elsewhere than by the graduated processes of the Royal Academy. As he was not yet twenty years of age, it could not be held that he was at all belated, if only now he could make a real beginning.

The letter to Mr. Brown is so important from all points of view that I think well to transcribe it here verbatim.

"*March 1848.*

"50 CHARLOTTE STREET, PORTLAND PLACE.

"SIR,—

"I am a student in the Antique School of the Royal Academy. Since the first time I ever went to an exhibition (which was several years ago, and when I saw a picture of yours from Byron's *Giaour*) I have always listened with avidity if your name happened to be mentioned, and rushed first of all to your number in the Catalogue.

The *Parisina*, the *Study in the Manner of the Early Masters*, *Our Lady of Saturday-night*, and the other glorious works you have exhibited, have successively raised my admiration, and kept me standing on the same spot for fabulous lengths of time. The outline from your *Abstract Representation of Justice* which appeared in one of the Illustrated Papers constitutes, together with an engraving after that great painter Von Holst,<sup>1</sup> the sole pictorial adornment of my room [this was a room, originally our father's dressing-room, quite at the top of the house 50 Charlotte Street. Small and bare and uncared-for it was, but how many hours, which in retrospect seem glorious hours, have I not passed in it with my brother! how many books have we not read to one another, how many *bouts-rimés* sonnets have we not written, over its scanty fireplace!]. And, as for the *Mary Queen of Scots*, if ever I do anything in the art, it will certainly be attributable in a great degree to the constant study of that work [this was a very large painting, *The Execution of Mary Queen of Scots*, now in the possession of Mr. Boddington. My brother had seen it in the Pantheon Bazaar, where it hung for years rather than months].

"It is not therefore to be wondered at if, wishing to obtain some knowledge of colour (which I have as yet scarcely attempted), the hope suggests itself that you may possibly admit pupils to profit by your invaluable assistance. If, such being the case, you would do me the honour to inform me what your terms would be for six months' instruction, I feel convinced that I should then have some chance in the Art.

"I remain, Sir, very truly yours,

"GABRIEL C. ROSSETTI."

It is somewhat remarkable that, apart from his allusion to a print of the *Justice*, my brother did not here refer to Madox Brown's three Cartoons in Westminster Hall—works which he assuredly and very rightly admired as much at least as any of the paintings specified, and more than most

<sup>1</sup> Von Holst is not much remembered now. He was an Anglo-German painter, greatly addicted to supernatural subjects, which he treated with imaginative impulse and considerable pictorial skill—*Lord Lyttelton and the Ghost*, *Faust and Mephistopheles in the Wine-cellar*, *The Death of Lady Macbeth*, etc. He died towards 1850, in early middle age.

of them. Apparently he dwelt on paintings alone, because his immediate object was to obtain guidance in the use of colour.

Mr. Brown, born on 16 April 1821, was close upon twenty-seven years of age when he received this letter, or about seven years older than Rossetti. He was a vigorous-looking young man, with a face full of insight and purpose; thick straight brown hair, fair skin, well-coloured visage, blueish eyes, broad brow, square and rather high shoulders, slow and distinct articulation. His face was good-looking as well as fine; but less decidedly handsome, I think, than it became towards the age of forty. As an old man—he died on 6 October 1893—he had a grand patriarchal aspect; his hair, of a pure white, being fully as abundant as when first I knew him, supplemented now by a long beard. Born in Calais of English parents, and brought up chiefly abroad, he was the sort of man who had no idea of being twitted without exacting the reason why. Such profuse praise as he now received from his unknown correspondent was what fortune had not accustomed him to, and he suspected that some ill-advised person was trying to make game of him. From his studio in Clipstone Street, very near Charlotte Street, he sallied forth with a stout stick in his hand. Knocking at No. 50, he would not give his name, nor proceed further than the passage. When Dante came down, Brown's enquiry was, "Is your name Rossetti, and is this your writing?" An affirmative being returned, the next question was, "What do you mean by it?" to which Rossetti rationally replied that he meant what he had written. Brown now perceived that after all the whole affair was *bonâ fide*; and (as the Family-letters show) he not only consented to put his neophyte in the right path of painting, but would entertain no offer of payment, and made Rossetti his friend on the spot—a friend for that day, in the spring of 1848, and a friend for life.

For these details I have relied chiefly on the book of Mr. Bell Scott, who relates the interview in the words (such they purport to be) of Rossetti himself in conversation with Scott.

Mr. Stephens gives a similar though briefer narrative, on the authority of Brown's anecdotic discourse, which was often of a very amusing kind, and replete with minute particulars. For truth's sake I will say that I cannot remember having ever heard either Brown or my brother refer to these minor incidents of the stout stick, etc. ; but I am bound to believe Mr. Scott and Mr. Stephens, and I do believe them.

After paying a visit or two to the studio of Madox Brown—who was then engaged on his important picture of *Wiclif and John of Gaunt* (or possibly it was *Cordelia watching the bedside of Lear*)—Rossetti was informed by his instructor that he should set-to at copying a picture, and at painting some still-life—pickle-jars or bottles. According to Mr. Holman Hunt, he copied the picture (I have not the least recollection of what it was), but his aspiring soul chafed sorely against the pickle-jars. This, however reasonably enjoined by Mr. Brown, was the very sort of drudgery which, in applying to him, Rossetti had hoped to avoid. The pickle-jars were nevertheless painted. The study remained in the hands of Mr. Madox Brown, and, at the sale which was held at his house in May 1894, it turned up, and was purchased by Mr. Herbert H. Gilchrist. My brother made also many original drawings or slight paintings under Brown's eye. These I no longer remember ; but I have lately seen one, which is said to be the first of all, and which was presented by Brown, only a few days before his death, to the young lady who is now Mrs. Ford M. Hueffer. It is a drawing of long narrow shape, in body-colour barely a little tinted, with a plain gilt ground ; and represents a young woman, auburn-haired, standing with joined hands. The face seems to be a reminiscence of Christina, but the nose is unduly long ; the drapery is delicately felt and done, and the whole thing has a forecast of the "Præraphaelite" manner. Without being exactly good, the work shows distinct promise for a youth, almost a novice at handling the brush.

From the pickle-jars ensued the second stage in this pictorial progress, and the beginning of my brother's close

intimacy with Hunt, who was about thirteen months his senior. Just towards the date when Dante was getting adequately, or more than adequately, disgusted with his still-life probation, the annual Exhibition of the Royal Academy opened at the commencement of May. He saw there Hunt's picture—an uncommonly fine one for so youthful a painter—of *The Eve of St. Agnes* (escape of Madeline and Porphyro from the castle). He “came up boisterously” (says Mr. Hunt), “and in loud tongue made me feel very confused by declaring that mine was the best picture of the year.” It seems that the like had occurred in 1847, when Hunt's exhibited picture was from Walter Scott's *Woodstock*. “Rossetti frankly asked me to let him call upon me.” When he did call,<sup>1</sup> he bewailed the pickle-jars or bottles, and sounded Hunt as to whether he need do any more of them. Hunt, without detracting from the general correctness of Brown's scheme of training, opined that Rossetti might permit himself to select for painting some composition of his own, and might begin on the canvas with the still-life proper to such a composition; and then this accessory part of the subject would no longer be repulsive, for it would be the mere adjunct or preparation for the interesting part. No advice could possibly have been more reasonable, considering on the one hand the temperament and aspirations of Rossetti, and on the other his great inexperience in the use of pigment. Mr. Hunt recommended that he should at once select for his picture a design recently contributed to a Sketching Society, and approved by Millais. This design must have been either *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, from Keats, or the scene of *Gretchen in Church*, from *Faust*; in all probability the latter. The *Belle Dame* seems

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hunt says that the encounter at the Academy exhibition was on the opening day (first Monday in May), and the visit to his studio “in a few days more.” Considering the date when the *Gretchen* design (mentioned by me in this context) was sent round and criticized, July 1848, and the date, 20 August, when Rossetti was finally settled with Hunt in a studio, I incline to think that the visit in question must have been about a couple of months later than the writer puts it.

to have passed out of observation, though I suppose not out of existence. At any rate, the *Gretchen* exists, and was exhibited in 1883 in the Burlington Club collection of my brother's works.

A word or two must be given to the Sketching Society here in question. It was termed the Cyclographic Society. Each member produced a design, and sent it round to colleagues in a portfolio, to be inspected and criticized. The members, besides Millais and Rossetti, were Hunt, John Hancock the sculptor, William Dennis, N. E. Green, J. T. Clifton, Walter Howell Deverell, J. B. Keene, T. Watkins, James Collinson, Richard Burchett, F. G. Stephens, Thomas Woolner, and J. A. Vinter. As Sir John Millais's criticism on the *Gretchen* is interesting on every ground, and especially in this connexion, I give it here :—

“A very clever and original design, beautifully executed. The figures which deserve the greatest attention are the four figures praying to the left. The young girl's face is very pretty, but the head is too large; the other three are full of piety. The Devil is in my opinion a mistake; his head wants drawing, and the horns through the cowl are commonplace, and therefore objectionable. The right arm of Margaret should have been shown, for, by hiding the Devil's right hand (which is not sufficiently prominent), you are impressed with the idea that he is tearing her to pieces for a meal. The drawing and composition of Margaret are original, and expressive of utter prostration. The greatest objection is the figure with his back towards you, who is unaccountably short; the pleasing group of lovers should have occupied his place. The girl and child in the foreground are exquisite in feeling, the flaming sword well introduced and highly emblematic of the subject, which is well chosen, and, with a few alterations in its treatment, should be painted. Chairs out of perspective.”

I can easily believe this last item; for Rossetti never paid any attention, worth speaking of, to perspective, and indeed—so far as his own interest in matters of art was concerned—was at all times almost indifferent to the question whether

his works were in perspective or out of it. Mr. Stephens did something to arrange the perspective of Rossetti's picture (1849-50) of *The Annunciation*, now in the National Gallery, and in 1850 gave him a few lessons—and would not have minded giving many more—in this bugbear science. The reader will not fail to note the thoroughly practical and well-balanced tone of Millais's remarks in all other respects. The Cyclographic Society did not last long, as may be gathered from Rossetti's letter of 30 August 1848. I think the more progressive artists among its members got tired of association with some others, and hastened its dissolution. I can remember attending one or two meetings of the Society; though why I was admitted—unless it be that Dante *sic voluit, sic jussit*—I fail to see.

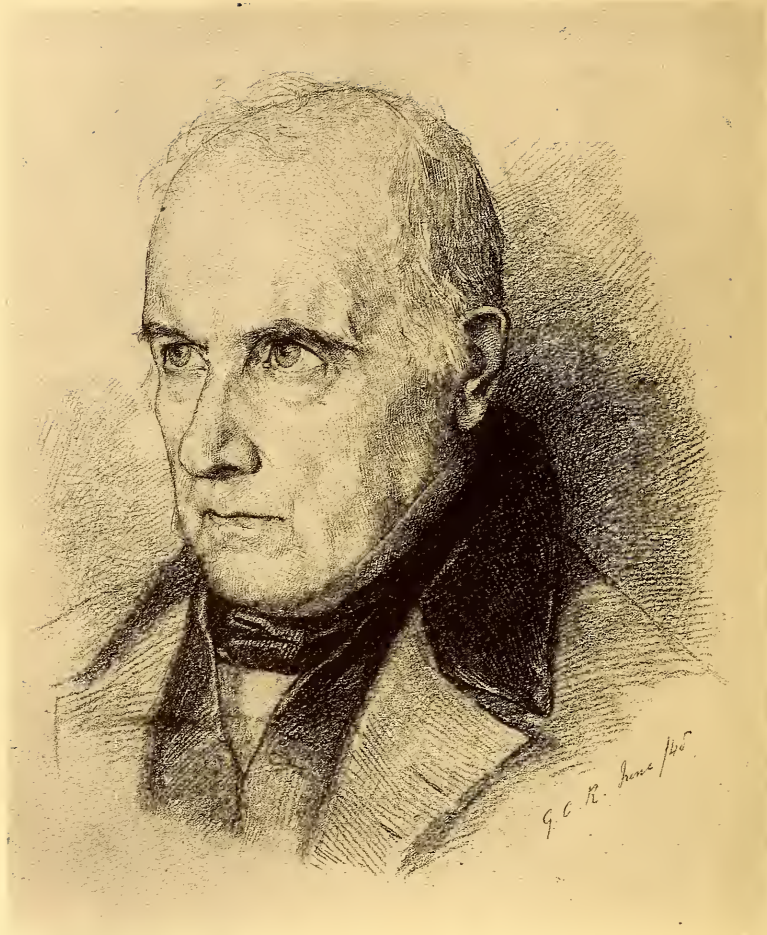
At the interview of which I have been speaking Rossetti (according to Holman Hunt) gave the latter to understand that, being oppressed by the pickle-jars, he had written to Leigh Hunt (whom he did not know), submitting some of his poems, original and translated, for courteous perusal, and asking whether it might seem feasible for him to trust to literature rather than fine art as a profession. A copy of Leigh Hunt's letter in reply is still extant. The date (it will be perceived) is 31 March, and it was written "at length"—*i.e.*, some good while after he had received the poems. Rossetti's letter to Brown was only sent at some date in March; and, looking to these dates, I rather question whether his communication to Leigh Hunt could have been consequent upon his affliction over the pickle-jars. Here is the veteran poet's very kind and considerate letter to a youth in all ways totally unknown:—

"KENSINGTON, *March* 31, 1848.

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"I have at length had the pleasure of reading your manuscripts, but am still forced to be very brief. I hope the agreeableness of my remarks will make amends for their shortness, since you have been good enough to constitute me a judge of powers of which you ought to have no doubt. I felt perplexed, it is true, at first, by





*By D. G. Rosselli.*

GAETANO POLIDORI.

1848.

the translations, which, though containing evidences of a strong feeling of the truth and simplicity of the originals, appeared to me harsh, and want correctness in the versification. I guess indeed that you are altogether not so musical as pictorial. But, when I came to the originals of your own, I recognized an unquestionable poet, thoughtful, imaginative, and with rare powers of expression. I hailed you as such at once, without any misgiving; and, besides your Dantesque heavens (without any hell to spoil them), admired the complete and genial round of your sympathies with humanity. I know not what sort of painter you are. If you paint as well as you write, you may be a rich man; or at all events, if you do not care to be rich, may get leisure enough to cultivate your writing. But I hardly need tell you that poetry, even the very best—nay, the best, in this respect, is apt to be the worst—is not a thing for a man to live upon while he is in the flesh, however immortal it may render him in spirit.—When I have succeeded in finding another house, I hope you will give me the pleasure of your acquaintance: and meantime I am, Dear Sir, with hearty zeal in the welfare of your genius,

“Your obliged and faithful Servant,

“LEIGH HUNT.

“P.S.—You will see some pencil-marks at the side of the passages I most admired.”

I possess a portrait done by my brother in pencil in June 1848, representing our grandfather, head and shoulders. It is excellently good; and so strongly and exactly realistic as to prove to demonstration that Rossetti, a short while before the Præraphaelite scheme began, required no further prompting from outside as to the artistic virtues inherent in a scrupulous fidelity to Nature. Mr. Brown had no doubt impressed this upon him, if he had not already found it out for himself. In one way or another he had laid the lesson thoroughly to heart, and was more than a mere apprentice to Truth. My reader can judge for himself of this portrait, as it is here reproduced.

Rossetti closed eagerly with Holman Hunt's suggestion as to beginning a picture, to combine practice in still-life and accessory with more palatable work; and he asked to be

allowed to become joint-tenant of a studio which Hunt was about to take. To this his new friend acceded; and nothing surely could have been more serviceable to my brother as a beginner in the painting-art. The studio selected was a back-room on the first floor at No. 7 (now 46) Cleveland Street, Fitzroy Square, close to Howland Street. Mr. Stephens has given an amusingly cheerless account of this establishment. I will borrow a few sentences from him; though my own reminiscences of the place, tinted as they are by the light-heartedness of youth, do not present quite so gloomy a picture.

“Dans un grenier qu'on est bien a vingt ans!”

And indeed I was not fully nineteen when my brother entered upon his studio at No 7 Cleveland Street, his living and sleeping rooms being still at No 50 Charlotte Street.

“It was even then a dismal place, the one big window of which looked to the East, and through which, when neither smoke, fog, nor rain, obscured the unlovely view, you could see the damp orange-coloured piles of timber a neighbouring dealer in that material had, within a few yards of the room, piled in monstrous heaps upon his backyard. Nothing could be more depressing than the large gaunt chamber, . . . where the dingy walls, distempered of a dark maroon which dust and smoke stains had deepened, added a most undesirable gloom. The approach to it was by a half-lighted staircase up which the fuss and clatter of a boys'-school kept by the landlord of the house . . . frequently arose.”

And now we come to the third link in this chain of acquaintanceship—namely, to Rossetti's close fellowship with Millais. Brown had indirectly led on to Hunt, and Hunt led on directly to Millais. The latter, born in the summer of 1829, was Rossetti's junior by more than a year, but vastly in advance of him as an artist. I need not enter here upon the early career of this great painter; his quite singular promise in mere boyhood, his conspicuous successes in his first youth. Millais was the pattern—the unattainable pattern—for all

Academy-students, and was by this date an exhibiting painter of some performance and any amount of promise. My brother could not but know him by sight long before now, and must have exchanged speech with him more than once both at the Royal Academy and at the Cyclographic Society. With Millais however he was not as yet on a footing of friendship, which Hunt was. "The companionship of Rossetti and myself," says Mr. Hunt, "soon brought about a meeting with Millais, at whose house one night we found a book of engravings of the frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa." The house was that at which Millais lived with his parents, No. 83 (now 7) Gower street, having a long rather shed-like studio, built out on the ground-floor along the line of a narrow turning. The juncture was a momentous one for all the three young painters.

### XIII.

#### *THE PRÆRAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD.*

MR. HOLMAN HUNT considers, and I would be willing to confirm his view if it needed any confirmation, that it was the inspection of the Campo Santo engravings, "at this special time, which caused the establishment of the Præraphaelite Brotherhood." They are not engravings doing justice to the works represented—indeed, Ruskin has somewhere termed them "Lasinio's execrable engravings." But they give some idea of the motives, feeling, and treatment, of the paintings of Gozzoli, and of those ascribed to Orcagna and other mediæval masters. It seems that Rossetti was not quite prepared beforehand to believe in these very olden painters, and Brown specially cautioned him not to undervalue them. I well recollect the enthusiasm with which, subsequently to seeing the engravings, Dante spoke to me on the subject, and soon afterwards I was allowed an opportunity of examining the prints for myself. Most things, whether books or ideas, were in common, at this time and for years after-

wards, between my brother and myself, and whatever one of us lighted upon was rapidly imparted to the other. Mr. Hunt makes some valuable observations on the direction of mind which started the Præraphaelite idea, and on the respective contributions which the very diverse temperaments and gifts of its three initiators brought to the common stock. I will not take the liberty of borrowing his remarks *en bloc*; but, bearing them heedfully in mind, I will say what I can on the subject from my own standing-point.

The Lasinio incident may be proper to the month of August or of September 1848, when Hunt was twenty-one years of age, Rossetti twenty, and Millais nineteen. They had thus barely ceased to be big boys; but Hunt and Millais were already very capable and recognized painters, and all three were enthusiasts—enthusiasts with a difference. Millais perceived within himself powers which far exceeded those of most of the acknowledged heads of his profession, but which had been exercised as yet without any inbreathing of new and original life; Hunt was not only stubbornly persistent, but eagerly desirous of developing something at once solid and uncommon; Rossetti, a beginner in the art, was fired with inventive imaginings and a love of beauty, and was just as anxious as his colleagues to distinguish himself, though as yet not equally certain to do so. All three contemned the commonplace anecdotal subjects of most British painters of the day, and their flimsy pretences at cleverness of execution, unsupported either by clear intuition into the facts of Nature, or by lofty or masculine style, or by an effort at sturdy realization. There were of course exceptions, some distinguished and some noble exceptions; but the British School of Painting, as a school, was in 1848 wishy-washy to the last degree; nothing imagined finely, nor descried keenly, nor executed puissantly. The three young men hated all this. They hated the cant about Raphael and the Great Masters, for utter cant it was in the mouths of such underlings of the brush as they saw all around them; and they determined to make a new start on a firm basis. What

was the basis to be? It was to be serious and elevated invention of subject, along with earnest scrutiny of visible facts, and an earnest endeavour to present them veraciously and exactly.

This does not fully account for their calling themselves Præraphaelites. Mr. Hunt says—and he must be correct—that the word Præraphaelites “had first been used as a term of contempt by our enemies”; founded, it would seem, more upon the talk of the young men than upon anything (apart from such minor matters as the study of the Ghiberti Gates) which they had actually done. Hunt’s pictures as yet had no distinctively Præraphaelite quality, Millais’s were quite in the contrary line, and Rossetti was not known to have painted at all. But they saw, in the Italian painters from Giotto to Leonardo, and in certain early Flemish and German painters so far as they knew about them (which was little), a manifest emotional sincerity, expressed sometimes in a lofty and solemn way, and sometimes with a candid *naïveté*; they saw strong evidences of grace, decorative charm, observation and definition of certain appearances of Nature, and patient and loving but not mechanical labour. In the language of art there is, or ought to be, a certain distinction between the terms “conventionalism” and “conventionality.” Of conventionalism—an adherence to certain types, traditions, and preconceptions—there is assuredly a vast deal in these early masters; but of conventionality, as a lifeless application of school-precepts, accepted on authority, muddled in the very act of acceptance, and paraded with conceited or pedantic self-applause, there is, in the men who carried the art forward from point to point, no defined trace. Each of them did his best as he best could, and handed on the art to be bettered by his successor.

It was with this feeling, and obviously not with any idea of actually imitating any painters who had preceded Raphael, that the youths adopted as a designation, instead of repelling as an imputation, the word Præraphaelite. The word “Brotherhood” was, it seems, Rossetti’s term, put forward as

being preferable—which it most clearly was—to any such term as Clique or Association. And thus was the Præraphaelite Brotherhood constituted as the autumn of 1848 began.

Some writers have said that Rossetti was the originator of Præraphaelitism. This ignores the just claims of Hunt and Millais, which I regard as co-equal with his. Rossetti had an abundance of ideas, pictorial and also literary, and was fuller of “notions” than the other two, and had more turn for proselytizing and “pronunciamentos”; but he was not at all more resolute in wanting to do something good which should also be something new. He was perhaps the most defiant of the three; and undoubtedly a kind of adolescent defiance, along with art-sympathies highly developed in one direction, and unduly or even ignorantly restricted in others, played a part, and no small part, in Præraphaelitism. But Hunt, if less strictly defiant, was still more tough, and Millais was all eagerness for the fray—“longing to be at ‘em,” and to show his own mettle. The fact is that not one of the three could have done much as an innovator without the other two. A bond of mutual support was essential, and an isolated attempt might have fizzed off as a mere personal eccentricity. As it was, Præraphaelitism proved to be very up-hill work. It was more abused, as being the principle of a few men in unison, than it would have been if exemplified by one of them only; but the very abuse was the beginning of its triumph. Any one of them, if acting by himself, might have been recognized as a man of genius; he would hardly have become a power in art. If the invention of “the Præraphaelite Brotherhood” was a craze, it was a craze spiced with a deal of long-headedness. Some method in that sort of madness.

But, on these points as to his own relation to other Præraphaelite painters, Dante Rossetti has himself given a very distinct explanation. It appears in a letter which he addressed on 7 November 1868 to M. Ernest Chesneau, consequent on the publication of that able critic's book *Les Nations Rivaies dans l'Art*. The passage which I here quote

is printed in Professor Edouard Rod's volume, *Études sur le Dix-neuvième Siècle*, 1888, and the Professor leaves unaltered Rossetti's "incorrections de langue" :—

"En ce qui concerne la qualification de 'Chef de l'Ecole Préraphaélite' que vous m'attribuez d'après vos renseignements, je dois vous assurer le plus chaudement possible qu'elle ne m'est nullement due. Loin d'être 'Chef de l'Ecole' par priorité ou par mérite, je puis à peine me reconnaître comme y appartenant, si le style du peu que j'ai fait en peinture venait à être comparé avec les ouvrages des autres peintres nommés Préraphaélites. Ainsi, quand je trouve un peintre si absolument original que l'est Holman Hunt décrit comme étant mon 'disciple,' il m'est impossible de ne pas me sentir humilié en face de la vérité, et de ne pas vous assurer du contraire avec le plus grand empressement. Les qualités de réalisme, émotionnel mais extrêmement minutieux, qui donnent le cachet au style nommé Préraphaélite, se trouvent principalement dans tous les tableaux de Holman Hunt, dans la plupart de ceux de Madox Brown, dans quelques morceaux de Hughes, et dans l'œuvre admirable de la jeunesse de Millais. C'est la camaraderie, plutôt que la collaboration réelle du style, qui a uni mon nom aux leurs dans les jours d'enthousiasme d'il y a vingt ans."

The charge that the Præraphaelite trio applied themselves slavishly to mere copyism, microscopic detail, and the like, has been so often alleged that it had better be dealt with here at once. Mr. Hunt puts the matter plainly, and is a final authority upon it. I will therefore extract a few of his words :—

"It may be seen that we were never, what often we have been called, 'Realists.' I think the art would have ceased to have the slightest interest for any one of the three painters concerned, had the object been only to make a representation, elaborate or unelaborate, of a fact in Nature. . . . In agreeing to use the utmost elaboration in painting our first pictures, we never meant more than that the practice was essential for training the eye and the hand of the young artist. We should never have admitted that the relinquishment of this habit of work by a matured painter would make him less of a Præraphaelite."

To add anything to Mr. Hunt's dictum on this matter is almost an impertinence. I will nevertheless confirm it, as being a point of which I also was cognizant—and indeed the like view was expressed in a kind of declaration of principles of the Brotherhood which I drew up at the beginning of 1851, but which seems to be lost this long while. I will however concede thus much to the antagonist—that, although it is certainly true that the Præraphaelites looked upon elaboration of detail as being rather a discipline for students than a necessary practice for proficient, they were not always sufficiently careful to affirm this, but, in the heat of controversy, would sometimes seem to imply that such elaboration was really requisite, as well as admissible and useful.

I will advert briefly to one other point. It has been said that Madox Brown declined to join the Præraphaelite Brotherhood (and that he did decline is true) on the ground partly that he had no faith in coteries, and partly that the Præraphaelites insisted upon copying from a model exactly as he or she stood, and without permitting any modification of visage, etc., to suit the picture. The objection to coteries was, I believe, made by Brown, and was far from unreasonable; but, as for the objection to not deviating from the model, I entertain considerable doubt. Some such rule as a theory may perhaps have been in some degree of favour with the Brotherhood at one time or other; but I am certain it was not acted upon even in their first fervid year. The head of Lorenzo, in Millais's picture of 1848-9, *Lorenzo and Isabella* from Keats's poem, was painted from me, but the hair was made golden, whereas mine was black. The head of the Virgin Mary, in Rossetti's picture of the same year, was painted from our sister Christina, and here again the hair was made golden instead of dark brown. From Hunt's picture I have no doubt that some similar detail might be cited. All this I say without implying that that notion of strictest adherence to the model has *no* value. I think it has some, as conducing to a general air of genuineness and *vraisemblance*, though it should not be pushed to a pragmatistical extreme.

The three youths who founded the Præraphaelite Brotherhood did not aim at confining it to themselves, supposing that other eligible men could be discovered and enlisted. This was done with four young men—Thomas Woolner the sculptor, James Collinson a painter, Frederic George Stephens, an Academy-student of painting, and myself. I hardly know whether any of the three former had been sounded before the Lasinio evening, and the consequent formation of a Præraphaelite Brotherhood consisting of Millais, Hunt, and Rossetti. I presume not. Mr. Stephens was a particular ally of Mr. Hunt, who must, I apprehend, have been his introducer into the Brotherhood. Mr. Woolner was probably known to all three, and I could not affirm to which of them most—maybe Mr. Millais. Mr. Collinson, and of course myself, were nominated by my brother. I will say a little about three members of the Præraphaelite Brotherhood, or “P.R.B.”; the “P.R.B.’s,” as they called and for a while signed themselves. I omit Millais and Hunt, as being living men of renown with whom I need not meddle.

Thomas Woolner was a Suffolk man, born in December 1825, and was therefore about two years and a half older than Rossetti. He studied under the sculptor Behnes, and had already exhibited some few works before the P.R.B. was formed. Ultimately he became an R.A., and he died in October 1892. He produced some ideal works of superior quality, but became chiefly known as a portrait and bust sculptor. In this branch of the art, an energetic insight into character, and scrupulous skill in modelling and finish, were his leading merits. He was a genial manly personage, full of gusto for many things in life; a vigorous believer in himself and his performances, and (it may be allowed) rather disinclined to admit the deservings of any rivals in his art.

James Collinson, born in May 1825, was a small thick-necked man, chiefly a domestic painter, who began with careful and rather timid practice; in demeanour, modest and retiring. He had been a steady church-goer in the Anglican communion; but, about the date of the formation of the

Brotherhood, he became a Roman-catholic, and after a while saw fit, as a religionist, to resign his position as a P.R.B. He did not rise to distinction in the pictorial art, and died in the spring of 1881.

Frederic George Stephens, a little older than Hunt, exhibited a very few pictures in the early years of Præraphaelitism; but, while still young, he relinquished painting as a definite profession, and became an Art-critic, capable and influential. He had—or rather still has—an uncommonly well-moulded and picturesque face; painted by Millais as Ferdinand in the early picture *Ferdinand lured by Ariel*, and by Madox Brown soon afterwards as Jesus in the admirable work, now in the National Gallery, of *Jesus washing Peter's Feet*. It is a fact, and a melancholy one, that Dante Rossetti, as the years progressed, lost sight of all his "Præraphaelite Brothers" except only of Stephens at sparse intervals—"dear staunch Stephens, one of my oldest and best friends," as he wrote to Mr. Caine towards 1879.

Mr. Stephens had a great liking for the early schools of art, Italian and other. Possibly his knowledge of them exceeded that of any other P.R.B., and so far he might reasonably be called a "Præraphaelite." As to Woolner and Collinson, neither of them, from natural inclination or from course of study and practice, went at all in that direction; a fact which confirms the true view of the matter—that the Præraphaelites had no notion of recurring to or imitating old art, but simply aimed at pursuing the art in that spirit of personal earnestness and modesty, both as to the treatment of ideals and as to the contemplation of natural truths, which had animated the earlier Old Masters, and had faltered or failed in the later ones, and of which, in the current British School, the traces were few and far between. For myself, I obviously was, and I remained, an outsider, so far as the practice of fine art goes. I was made Secretary of the Brotherhood; and pretty soon I became an Art-critic—in *The Critic* (a weekly paper something like the *Athenæum*) from the summer of 1850, and in *The Spectator* from

November in the same year. I sometimes ponder with astonishment the fact that the first of these papers allowed me to instruct its public on matters of fine art before I was twenty-one years of age, and the second immediately afterwards. It is true that *The Germ* had appeared before I wrote in *The Critic*.

As soon as the Præraphaelite Brotherhood was formed it became a focus of boundless companionship, pleasant and touching to recall. We were really like brothers, continually together, and confiding to one another all experiences bearing upon questions of art and literature, and many affecting us as individuals. We dropped using the term "Esquire" on letters, and substituted "P.R.B." I do not exaggerate in saying that every member of the fraternity was just as much intent upon furthering the advance and promoting the interests of his "Brothers" as his own. There were monthly meetings, at the houses or studios of the various members in succession; occasionally a moonlight walk or a night on the Thames. Beyond this, but very few days can have passed in a year when two or more P.R.B.'s did not foregather for one purpose or another. The only one of us who could be regarded as moderately well off, living *en famille* on a scale of average comfort, was Millais; others were struggling or really poor. All that was of no account. We had our thoughts, our unrestrained converse, our studies, aspirations, efforts, and actual doings; and for every P.R.B. to drink a cup or two of tea or coffee, or a glass or two of beer, in the company of other P.R.B.'s, with or without the accompaniment of tobacco (without it for Dante Rossetti, who never smoked at all), was a heart-relished luxury, the equal of which the flow of long years has not often presented, I take it, to any one of us. Those were the days of youth; and each man in the company, even if he did not project great things of his own, revelled in poetry or sunned himself in art. Hunt, to my thinking, was the most sagacious talker; Woolner the most forceful and entertaining; Dante Rossetti the most intellectual. Such men could not be mere plodders in con-

versation : but all—to their credit be it spoken—were perfectly free-and-easy, and wholly alien from anything approaching to affectation, settled self-display, or stilted “tall talk.” And this holds good of every member of the Brotherhood. Mr. Hunt has done *more* than ample justice to Rossetti’s literary acquirements, saying of him, at the date when he entered upon the studio in Cleveland Street :—

“Rossetti had then perhaps a greater acquaintance with the poetical literature of Europe than any living man. His storehouse of treasures seemed inexhaustible. If he read twice or thrice a long poem, it was literally at his tongue’s end ; and he had a voice rarely equalled for simple recitations. . . . *Sordello* and *Paracelsus* he would give by forty and fifty pages at a time. . . . Then would come the pathetic strains of W. B. Scott’s *Rosabell*. . . . These, and there were countless other examples, all showed a wide field of interest as to poetic schools.”

Had the Præraphaelite Brotherhood any ulterior aim beyond that of producing good works of art ? Yes, and No. Assuredly it had the aim of developing such *ideas* as are suited to the medium of fine art, and of bringing the arts of form into general unison with what is highest in other arts, especially poetry. Likewise the aim of showing by contrast how threadbare were the pretensions of most painters of the day, and how incapable they were of constituting or developing any sort of School of Art worthy of the name. In the person of two at least of its members, Hunt and Collinson, it had also a definite relation to a Christian, and not a pagan or latitudinarian, line of thought. On the other hand, the notion that the Brotherhood, as such, had anything whatever to do with particular movements in the religious world—whether Roman Catholicism, Anglican Tractarianism, or what not—is totally, and, to one who formed a link in its composition, even ludicrously, erroneous. To say that Præraphælitism was part of “the ever-rising protest and rebellion of our century against artificial authority,” as in the cases of “the French Revolution” and Wordsworth and

Darwin, etc.,<sup>1</sup> is not indeed untrue, but is far too vague to account for anything. Again, the so-called German Præraphaelites—such as Schnorr, Overbeck, and Cornelius—were in no repute with the young British artists. They did, however, admire very much certain designs by ~~Fuhrich~~ <sup>Steinle</sup> from the Legend of St. Genevieve. Neither was Ruskin their inciter, though it is true that Hunt had read and laid to heart in 1847 the first volume of *Modern Painters*, the only thing then current as Ruskin's work. I do not think any other P.R.B. (with the possible exception of Collinson) had, up to 1848 or later, read him at all. That the Præraphaelites valued moral and spiritual ideas as an important section of the ideas germane to fine art is most true, and not one of them was in the least inclined to do any work of a gross, lascivious, or sensual description; but neither did they limit the province of art to the spiritual or the moral. I will therefore take it upon me to say that the bond of union among the Members of the Brotherhood was really and simply this—I, To have genuine ideas to express; 2, to study Nature attentively, so as to know how to express them; 3, to sympathize with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote; and 4, and most indispensable of all, to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues.

After the first fervour of youth was past, Rossetti was somewhat impatient of the terms Præraphaelitism and Præraphaelite. In 1880 he said to Mr. Caine something which that author records in the following words: "As for all the prattle about Præraphaelitism, I confess to you I am weary of it, and long have been. Why should we go on talking about the visionary vanities of half-a-dozen boys? What you call the movement was serious enough, but the banding together under that title was all a joke." And Mr. William Sharp says that, to a lady enquiring whether he was the Præraphaelite Rossetti (perhaps towards 1870), he replied,

<sup>1</sup> See Mrs. Wood's *Dante Rossetti and the Præraphaelite Movement*, p. 9.

"Madam, I am not an 'ite' of any kind ; I am only a painter." These statements I accept ; but it is not the less true that in 1848 and for some years afterwards he meant a good deal by calling himself Præraphaelite, and meant it very heartily.

I will complete here a few details about the Brotherhood, although these will lead me some way beyond the date which we have as yet reached, the autumn of 1848. In May 1849 it was settled that I, as Secretary to the Brotherhood, or its only non-professional member, should keep a Diary of the proceedings of the Society, and of the art-work of the several P.R.B.'s so far as that came within my cognizance. This I proceeded to do ; and up to 8 April 1850 I kept the Diary without the omission of a day. Afterwards I was less regular ; but still, allowing for several intervals, the Diary goes on to 29 January 1853. In my hands it continues ; but I am sorry to say that at some date—possibly about 1855—Dante inspected the MS. when I was not by ; and, finding some entries which, for one reason or another, he did not relish, he tore the pages up freely here and there—a summary proceeding quite in his style. I surmise that he saw some particulars about Miss Siddal (shortly to be mentioned) ; certainly nothing invidious about her, but he may have decreed in his own mind that her name should not appear in the record at all. Nevertheless a great deal still remains ; and furnishes a very authentic, if also an unentertaining, account of what the seven Præraphaelites were doing in those now remote years. There is a copy of Collinson's letter, May 1850, withdrawing from the Brotherhood—a step which he attributes to religious considerations as a Roman-catholic, though these are not defined with any extreme clearness. After this, in the autumn of the same year, is an entry purporting that Walter Howell Deverell "has worthily filled up the place left vacant by Collinson"—his nominator (I have no doubt, speaking from memory) being Dante Rossetti. But it appears that this election was considered not entirely valid by some other member or members, and, at a meeting of 9 February 1851, it was ruled that any such new member

must be subjected to annual re-election. At a previous meeting, 13 January, Millais expressed a doubt whether the name P.R.B. should be continued, as being liable to misconstruction; and a resolution was passed that each member should put down in writing what meaning he attached to the name, these declarations to be submitted to the next ensuing meeting. I feel considerable doubt whether any member, except myself, gave practical effect to the resolution. At any rate, the Diary shows nothing further about the matter. These were last dying efforts at a continuance of regular meetings, which, as recorded on 2 December 1850, had then already become "thoroughly obsolete." With virtuous intentions, new and stringent rules about meetings, etc., were adopted on 13 January 1851; but they were forthwith disobeyed, and the Præraphaelite Brotherhood, as a practical working organization, and something more than a mere knot of friends, may be regarded as from that date sinking into desuetude. For this there was at the time no sort of real reason; only that the several members were developing each in his own proper direction, were hard at work and scattered in local position, and found that any inclination for assembling together was subject to too many interruptions and obstacles. I fancy that Mr. Stephens and myself were the two members who most sincerely regretted this disruption. And so, as a definite scheme in the art-world, ended the Præraphaelite Brotherhood. The members got to talk less and less of Præraphaelitism, the public more and more; and the name still subsists in a very active condition—which is also a very lax and undefined one, and in many instances wholly misapplied.

In Rossetti's letter to his sister, dated 8 November 1853, a quotation may be observed, consequent upon the election of Millais as an Associate of the Royal Academy—

"So now the whole Round Table is dissolved."

And so it proved to be—if indeed the dissolution is not to be reckoned as dating earlier, which for most practical purposes it did. Christina hereupon, 10 November, wrote

a sonnet, neat though irregular, to which I will give a niche in my narrative :—

THE P.R.B.

“The P.R.B. is in its decadence :

For Woolner in Australia cooks his chops,  
And Hunt is yearning for the land of Cheops ;  
D. G. Rossetti shuns the vulgar optic ;  
While William M. Rossetti merely lops  
His B's in English disesteemed as Coptic ;  
Calm Stephens in the twilight smokes his pipe,  
But long the dawning of his public day ;  
And he at last the champion great Millais,  
Attaining Academic opulence,  
Winds up his signature with A.R.A.  
So rivers merge in the perpetual sea ;  
So luscious fruit must fall when over-ripe ;  
And so the consummated P.R.B.”

This sonnet had wholly lapsed from my recollection until I happened to light upon it during the progress of the present Memoir. The only point in it which in our time seems rather obscure is the reference to myself—which must mean that I, in my press-criticisms, made light of my P.R.B. colleagues (which is joke, not fact), and that my utterances met with no public regard (which is partial but not entire fact ; for these criticisms, appearing in a paper of such high repute as *The Spectator*, and being, in 1850 to 1852, nearly the only press-reviews which upheld the Præraphaelite cause, did excite some attention, and I suppose some anger. Mr. Stephens, who succeeded me on *The Critic*, must have co-operated). I will take this opportunity of saying that the statement, which has been constantly repeated in recent months, that Christina went among us by the name of “the Queen of the Præraphaelites,” is, to the best of my knowledge and remembrance, a mere invention. It was first put forward, I apprehend, by Mrs. Tooley, in an article on Christina which she published, in the autumn of 1894, in a serial entitled *The Young Woman*. I knew nothing of such an appellative ; Christina, to whom I mentioned it, knew nothing also ; and

Mr. Stephens, who has a long memory on all such details, neither knows nor believes anything of it.

I am minded—and I hope not to the reader's serious disgust—to insert here those Rules of the Brotherhood which, as aforesaid, were adopted on 13 January 1851, and were never carried into effect. They show or suggest not only what we then intended to do, but a great deal of what had been occupying our attention since the autumn of 1848. The day when we codified proved also to be the day when no code was really in requisition. The document, which is of course in my handwriting, runs as follows:—

“P.R.B.—Present, at Hunt's, himself, Millais, Stephens, and W. M. Rossetti, 13 January 1851.

“In consideration of the unsettled and unwritten state of the Rules guiding the P.R.B., it is deemed necessary to determine and adopt a recognized system.

“The P.R.B. originally consisted of seven members—Hunt, Millais, Dante and William Rossetti, Stephens, Woolner, and another; and has been reduced to six by the withdrawal of the last. It was at first positively understood that the P.R.B. is to consist of these persons and no others—secession of any original member not being contemplated; and the principle that neither this highly important rule nor any other affecting the P.R.B. can be repealed or modified, nor any finally adopted, unless on unanimous consent of the members, is hereby declared permanent and unalterable.

“Rule 1. That William Michael Rossetti, not being an artist, be Secretary of the P.R.B.

“2. Considering the unforeseen vacancy as above stated, Resolved that the question of the election of a successor be postponed until after the opening of the year's art-exhibitions. This Rule to be acted on as a precedent in case of any future similar contingency.

“3. That, in case a new election be voted, the person named as eligible be on probation for one year, enjoying meanwhile all the advantages of full membership, except as to voting.

“4. That, on the first Friday of every month, a P.R.B. meeting, such as has hitherto been customary, be held.

“5. That the present meeting be deemed the first in rotation under the preceding Rule; and that the future meetings be held

at the abodes of the several members, in order as follows—Millais, Dante Rossetti, William Rossetti, Stephens, Woolner.

"6. That, in the event of the absence of the Member at whose house any meeting falls due, or other obstacle—to be allowed as valid by the others—the Secretary be made aware of the fact; and that the Member next in rotation act for the absent Member: the ensuing meetings to follow as before provided.

"7. That unjustified absence under such circumstances subject the defaulter to a fine of 5s.

"8. That a Probationary Member be not\* required to take his turn in this rotation.

"9. That at each such monthly meeting the Secretary introduce any business that may require consideration—to the exclusion of other topics until such business shall have been dispatched.

"10. That any Member unavoidably absent be entitled to send his written opinion on any subject fixed for consideration.

"11. That, failing full attendance at a meeting, or unanimously expressed opinion, the members present may adopt Resolutions,—to remain in force until a dissenting opinion shall be made known.

"12. That any member absent from a meeting without valid excuse—to be allowed by the others—shall forfeit 2s. 6d.; and that no engagement with any other person whatever be held to supersede the obligation of a P.R.B. meeting.

"13. That the January meeting of each year be deemed the Anniversary Meeting.

"14. That the application of fines accruing as before specified be determined, by majority of votes, at each such annual meeting.

"15. That at each annual meeting the conduct and position of each P.R.B. during the past year, in respect of his membership, be reviewed; it being understood that any member who shall not appear to have acted up to the best of his opportunities in furtherance of the objects of the Brotherhood is expected, by tacit consent, to exert himself more actively in future.

"16. That the Secretary be required, as one chief part of his duty, to keep a Journal of the P.R.B.

"17. That the Journal remain the property of the Brotherhood collectively, and not of the Secretary or any other individual member; that it be considered expedient in ordinary cases to read the Journal at each meeting at the Secretary's residence; and that

any member have the power to require its production whenever he may think fit.<sup>1</sup>

"18. That any election which may be hereafter proposed be determined by ballot.

"19. That any such election be renewable annually by vote of the six original members.

"20. That any member considered unworthy to continue in the Brotherhood cease to be a P.R.B. on the unanimous vote of his peers—*i.e.*, of those in the same class, as regards date of election, as himself.<sup>2</sup>

"21. That the fines be received by the Secretary.

"22. That the 23rd of April be kept sacred annually to Shakespear, as an obligation equally binding as that of a P.R.B. meeting.

"23. That, in case any P.R.B. should feel disposed to adopt publicly any course of action affecting the Brotherhood, the subject be in the first instance brought before the other members."

Having now disposed of the Præraphaelite Brotherhood as an organization, I must revert to the doings of Dante Rossetti in the studio which from the latter end of August 1848 he shared with Mr. Hunt. It seems that the idea at starting was that Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti, should each produce an etching from Keats's *Isabella*, and thus show forth to the public their close connexion in purpose and in work. This intention however did not take effect. Millais, in lieu of an etching, proceeded to paint his celebrated picture from *Isabella*; Hunt undertook *Rienzi swearing Revenge over his*

<sup>1</sup> Up to this point the Rules are written out by me in a clear deliberate script, being evidently a recast, done at leisure, from my first hasty jottings. The subsequent Rules are written hurriedly, and must have reached me in some different way: I forget the details. The restrictive clause, 17, as to the Journal, was proposed by myself. It was not a precautionary measure against me taken by some one else.

<sup>2</sup> No doubt this must be imperfectly expressed. The real intention must be that, whereas an original P.R.B. could only be discarded by the votes of the other original members, a subsequently elected P.R.B. could be discarded by the votes of *the original members*, and also of any members of his own standing in point of date.

*Brother's Corpse*; and Rossetti chose as his subject *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, painted on panel, 33 inches by 25. I have no clear recollection of any details leading up to this selection. He must have thought that the subject was one particularly worthy of a "Præraphaelite" painter; and perhaps the consideration that he could treat it without any strained or difficult actions, and without any plethora of accessory, and with a certain reserve of style rather than energetic realism in this his first attempt, may have weighed with him. Of course however the plan was to paint all parts of the picture carefully from Nature, and this he did not fail to do. Hunt was of much use to him as an adviser, and Madox Brown frequently came in to inspect and control. Rossetti, according to Mr. Hunt, displayed "unchecked impatience at difficulties"; and I can remember something of this. A remonstrance from Hunt had a good effect, and the young painter managed to curb himself somewhat. "When he had once sat down," says Mr. Hunt, "and was immersed in the effort to express his purpose, and the difficulties had to be wrestled with, his tongue was hushed, he remained fixed, and inattentive to all that went on about him; he rocked himself to and fro, and at times he moaned lowly or hummed for a brief minute, as though telling off some idea." He found time also for sitting to Hunt for the head of Rienzi, and to Brown for that of the Fool of King Lear in the picture (previously mentioned) of *Cordelia watching the Bedside of Lear*. Both of these are good likenesses, and must remain of the highest interest to sympathizers with Rossetti as showing what he appeared in the birth-year of Præraphaelitism. Moreover he painted in oils a head of Christina, which must thus be the very first finished painting he produced.

Perhaps Rossetti had never been forestalled in representing an ideal scene of the home-life of the Virgin Mary with her parents; certainly not in the particular invention which this picture embodies. The Virgin, aged about seventeen, is shown working at an embroidery under the eye of her mother

St. Anna. The embroidery represents a lily, the emblem of purity, which she copies from a plant watered by a child-angel. The father St. Joachim<sup>1</sup> is behind, trailing up a vine. The Holy Ghost, in the form of a dove, is also present. The head of the Virgin was painted from Christina Rossetti, that of St. Anna from our mother: both very faithful likenesses. The vase containing the lily is mounted upon six large volumes lettered with the names of virtues, Charity being the uppermost. There are numerous other details, each with a symbolic or spiritual meaning; and I will venture to say that every one of the meanings is well conceived and rightly indicated. For the frame of the picture my brother had a slip of gilt paper printed (I still possess a copy of it) containing two sonnets of his composition—the first setting forth the general purport of the work, and the second its individual symbols. The sonnets have been reproduced elsewhere, and with some reluctance I omit them here; but may observe that the leading conception of the picture is expressed in the close of the second sonnet—

“She soon shall have achieved  
Her perfect purity; yea God the Lord  
Shall soon vouchsafe His son to be her son.”

This picture is painted in rather bright but not crude colours—a love for the primary hues, so much affected by painters of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, being a very marked *trait* in the practice of the Præraphaelite Brotherhood at its inception. The handling is delicate and finished, aiming at nicety rather than strength, but it should hardly perhaps be called timid; the surface is rather thin. If I remember right, the only medium used was copal, for the P.R.B.'s had a horror of thick and cloggy vehicles. There is certainly not the least *bravura* in the work, neither did its painter wish that there should be any; but it is very far from being

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bell Scott says “St. Joseph,” and laughs at his being occupied otherwise than as a carpenter; but, the personage being mis-stated, the laugh is misapplied.

incompetent, and, considered as the first painting of a youth of twenty, it may claim to be highly remarkable. There is (or was) some gilding in the hair of the Virgin and in the nimbus round the Dove. The forms are pure and simple, but not ascetic, and of course with no sort of copyism from archaic art. The point most approaching to rigidity is the straight contour-line formed by Mary's legs, running parallel to the embroidery-frame. This would have been improved by some modification.

There are three sonnets by Rossetti which belong to the early days of Præraphælitism, and which well deserve to be considered by persons who would like to understand that movement, and the temper in which Rossetti viewed it. They now form a portion of *The House of Life*, and are named collectively *Old and New Art*. The second and third—bearing the titles *Not as These*, and *The Husbandman*—were written in 1848; the first, *St. Luke the Painter*, in 1849; and this was intended to illustrate a picture (never painted) of Luke preaching, having beside him pictures, his own work, of Christ and the Virgin Mary. These three sonnets testify to a highly religious (not necessarily dogmatic) view of the function of the Art, to love of the old painters, and revolt against the more modern ones, and to a modest and yet resolute desire to aid in reinstating the Art in its legitimate place. The spirit which animates the sonnets is that of a man destined to dare and do, and to overcome.

Another painting—his second oil portrait—was produced by Dante Rossetti towards the close of 1848—the likeness of our father, half-length life-size, commissioned by Dante's godfather Mr. Lyell. Both as a likeness and as a picture this work is creditable and interesting, without being excellent.

#### XIV.

##### *FIRST EXHIBITED PICTURE—1849.*

AS this is a Memoir of Rossetti, and not a Monograph on the Præraphælite Brotherhood, I shall not apply myself to

following out the course of the several members ; but will only say that the three chief painters, Millais, Hunt, and Rossetti, were ready with their pictures in time for the Exhibiting-season of 1849. Millais and Hunt sent to the Royal Academy, Rossetti to the so-called Free Exhibition near Hyde Park Corner. This was the second year of that Exhibition as a Picture Gallery. Its first year, 1848, had been distinguished by the display of Madox Brown's highly interesting and important painting, *Wiclif reading his Translation of the New Testament to John of Gaunt* ; a painting which, in its bright but rather pale colouring, lightness of surface, and general feeling of quietism,<sup>1</sup> had beyond a doubt served in some respects to mould the ideas and beacon the practice of the P.R.B.'s. The Free Exhibition was not really free. The exhibiting artists had to pay for their space, and a percentage upon sales, and the public had to pay for admission. I suppose that it professed to be free on the very ground that all artists were free to hang pictures there if only they would pay for the space ; and I further suppose that this was a principal incentive to my brother for betaking himself to that gallery rather than the Royal Academy. Mr. Brown's example (for he again exhibited here in 1849) must also have influenced him. My brother was proud, and in his way prudent as well ; and he must have contemplated with revulsion the mere possibility of being rejected at the Academy—an institution which (apart from any crudities or peculiarities in his first picture) might perhaps view him with some disfavour as having abandoned the Academy course of instruction, and learned from an outsider how to handle pigments and brushes. Next year, 1850, the Free Exhibition quitted Hyde Park Corner, and went to Regent Street near Langham Place, and was there entitled the National Institution, or Portland Gallery. It continued for some years, dying out towards 1855. *The Girlhood of*

<sup>1</sup> I have not seen this picture in late years ; have some idea that it was re-worked upon, and strengthened in tint and tone.

*Mary Virgin* was signed "Dante Gabriele Rossetti, P.R.B.,"<sup>1</sup> and the same initials appeared on the pictures of Millais and Hunt, and also of Collinson. This year the initials passed without exciting any definite notice.

It is a fact that the paintings of our three Præraphaelites were well received by press and public, and Millais and Hunt were more than tolerably well hung in the Academy. This becomes a remarkable fact when we consider the storm of disapprobation, rage, and contumely, which the pictures of the same men—certainly showing an advance in pictorial quality—encountered in the exhibitions of 1850. The reason for this differing treatment is obvious enough, and not less discreditable than obvious. In 1849 the pictures were judged on their merits, as three independent productions of young and promising men. In 1850 the initials P.R.B. were understood; the young men were discovered to be working on a common principle, in antagonism more or less decided to established rules and current reputations; and the floodgates of virulence were let loose, not because the pictures were bad—they are now well known to be good—but because their authors were regarded and detested as pestilent heretics. It is a humiliating retrospect, but not for the P.R.B.'s.

The Free Exhibition opened at the end of March 1849, the Academy of course at its usual date, the first Monday in May; and thus, of all the Præraphaelites, Rossetti happened to be the first to challenge a public verdict. As I have already intimated, it proved a favourable one. I cannot say how many papers criticized him. I have before me five extracts, and possibly these—along with *The Builder*, which was also laudatory—were all. They come from the *Art Journal*, *Literary Gazette*, *Morning Chronicle*, *Observer*, and *Athenæum*. In all of them there is high praise, intermixed with blame, more or less mild. Soon after that date I came to know something of Art-critics, their ways and means; and

<sup>1</sup> So Mr. Sharp says. This seems to be the earliest instance in which Rossetti used "Dante" as his *first* christian name. In the printed Catalogue the name stands "G. D. Rossetti."

I can safely say that in my youth—I will go no further than that—they knew, as a body of men, only a very moderate proportion of what they talked about. But clearly Dante Rossetti had no reason to complain at this period. The critics were more than courteous to a youth as yet totally unknown. I will give here the notice from the *Athenæum*, being the most elaborate of the five. In 1850 it was generally understood by the Præraphaelites—and I believe correctly so—that Mr. Frank Stone the painter was the Art-critic of the *Athenæum*. He was then highly abusive. Whether he was the same writer who had sounded a very different note in 1849 I do not profess to know.

“It is pleasant to turn from the mass of commonplace, the record of mere fact or the extravagant conceits exhibited in the illustrations of some of our most cherished writers, prose and poetic, to a manifestation of true mental power, in which Art is made the exponent of some high aim, and what is ‘of the earth, earthy,’ and of the Art, material, is lost sight of in a dignified and intellectual purpose. Such a work will be found here; not from a long-practised hand, but from one young in experience, new to fame, Mr. G. D. Rossetti. He has painted *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (368); a work which, for its invention and for many parts of its design, would be creditable to any exhibition. In idea it forms a fitting pendent to Mr. Herbert’s *Christ subject to his Parents at Nazareth*. A legend may possibly have suggested to Mr. Rossetti also the subject of his present work [I am sure this was not the fact]. The Virgin is, in this picture, represented as living amongst her family, and engaged in the task of embroidering drapery—to supply possibly some future sacred vestment [no such intention]. The picture, which is full of allegory, has much of that sacred mysticism inseparable from the works of the early masters, and much of the tone of the poets of the same time. While immature practice is visible in the executive department of the work, every allusion gives evidence of maturity of thought—every detail that might enrich or amplify the subject has found a place in it. The personification of the Virgin is an achievement worthy of an older hand. Its spiritualized attributes, and the great sensibility with which it is wrought, inspire the expectation that Mr. Rossetti will

continue to pursue the lofty career which he has here so successfully begun. The sincerity and earnestness of the picture remind us forcibly of the feeling with which the early Florentine monastic painters wrought; and the form and face of the Virgin recall the words employed by Savonarola in one of his powerful sermons: 'Or pensa quanta bellezza avea la Vergine, che avea tanta santità che risplendeva in quella faccia della quale dice San Tommaso che nessuno che la vedesse mai la guardò per concupiscenza, tanta era la santità che rilustrava in lei.' Mr. Rossetti has, perhaps unknowingly, entered into the feelings of the renowned Dominican, who in his day wrought as much reform in Art as in morals. The coincidence is of high value to the picture."

The whole transaction with *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, considered as a first picture, was a most encouraging success. Rossetti hung it at his own discretion; he was complimented by the press; his sonnets passed not unnoticed, Sir Theodore Martin in especial being singularly struck by them; and he sold the painting promptly for his own price of £80. The purchaser was the Marchioness Dowager of Bath, in whose family our aunt, Charlotte Polidori, was governess, and afterwards companion. The Marchioness after a while presented the picture to her daughter Lady Louisa Feilding. With this lady the work remained until a recent date. Who the present owner may be I know not. After getting it back from the exhibition Dante painted a fresh head to the girl-angel. By 25 August he despatched her purchase to Lady Bath. Perhaps the best success of all was that, in 1864, receiving the picture for re-framing, he found it to be "a long way better than he thought." "It quite surprised me (and shamed me a little) to see what I did fifteen years ago," is an expression in one of his letters.

It has appeared to me no other than requisite to dwell at some length on the early years of my brother—his family surroundings, his beginnings in drawing and writing, his sympathies for painters and authors, his studies, and the commencement of his professional practice. We have now reached the point where he is an exhibiting and well-accepted painter,

and a poet of considerable though as yet not public performance. Were I to pursue with equal minuteness his doings from year to year in art and in literature, I should exceed the bounds which I contemplate—should perhaps exceed any *reasonable* bounds. Many matters remain which will require copious and free treatment ; but I do not propose to turn this Memoir into an accurate—still less an exhaustive—record of all the pictures and designs, and all the writings, which he continued to produce from year to year. Some things stand out as landmarks or milestones in his career, and these will receive due consideration ; others will be passed over or summarized. Besides, I have already produced a book, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti as Designer and Writer*,<sup>1</sup> giving in chronological order a great number of details, major and minor, about his performances, their sales and purchasers, etc. etc. ; and some readers of the present narrative, feeling any interest in those particulars, can supplement, by reference to that volume, anything which they may hold to be deficient in this. My present scope is wider and more personal. The things which Dante Rossetti produced will indeed be of primary importance to it ; but rather as being a symptom and outcome of his personality—a portion of his life—than as forming my main subject-matter.

## XV.

## THE GERM.

IF Dante Rossetti cannot rightly be credited (in derogation of Hunt and Millais) with inventing the Præraphaelite movement and Brotherhood, a very significant enterprize, he certainly *can* be credited with inventing *The Germ*. He was eager to distinguish himself in literature, no less than painting, and wanted to have some safe vehicle both for ushering his writings before the public, and for diffusing abroad the Præraphaelite principles in art. I feel pretty sure that at first every

<sup>1</sup> Published by Cassell & Co., 1889. It is now out of print.

one of his colleagues regarded the enterprize as rash, costly, foredoomed to failure, and an interruption to other more pressing and less precarious work. But Rossetti was not to be denied. The magazine was enacted in his mind; it was to be, and was to enlist the energies of all the P.R.B.'s, and of some other persons as well. With varying degrees of reluctance his friends yielded. As the project progressed, some of them seem even to have yielded with willing assent. Among these, Hunt, Woolner, and myself, may have stood foremost.

The "P.R.B. Diary" shall be my chief guide in relating the history of *The Germ*; several relevant details will be found also in the Family-letters. The first entry which I find bearing upon this subject is dated 13 July 1849, and runs as follows:—

"In the evening Gabriel and I went to Woolner's with the view of seeing North (whom however we did not find at home) about a project for a monthly sixpenny magazine, for which four or five of us would write, and one make an etching—each subscribing a guinea, and thus becoming a proprietor. [As to North—a very familiar figure in those days with Woolner, Dante, and myself, but scarcely so with the other P.R.B.'s—some particulars will be found in my note to Letter C 8.] The full discussion of the subject is fixed for to-morrow at Woolner's."

The title first thought of was *Monthly Thoughts in Literature, Poetry, and Art*; and it was immediately projected to increase the magazine to forty pages, two etchings, and a price of one shilling. On 23 September, being in the Isle of Wight, I received a letter informing me that I was appointed Editor, "as difficulties in keeping back the ardour of our new proprietors [not all of them P.R.B.'s] began to rise up"; and a prospectus had been sent off to the printer's, with the title altered to *Thoughts towards Nature*, which was Dante's idea. Messrs. Aylott & Jones, of Paternoster Row, were selected as publishers. Soon afterwards a different title was proposed, *The P.R.B. Journal*; but to this I objected, partly on the ground that some of the writers, and even of the proprietors,

would not belong to the Brotherhood. In November we resolved to do no advertizing, owing to the expense. This decision was almost, yet not absolutely, adhered to. There was some small amount of ordinary advertizing; and in May placards were posted and carried about in front of the Academy exhibition.

We now come to December, the month which was to be devoted to the printing of our opening number, so that it might appear at the close of that month, or the beginning of January. On 17 December Rossetti resumed writing his prose story *Hand and Soul*, for our No. 1; on the 21st he was at it all day and all night,<sup>1</sup> and finished the narrative—the epilogue remaining over till the following day. Meanwhile, on the 19th, there had been a meeting of no small moment to us at his studio—which was, since 10 October, No. 72 Newman Street, the rent £26 per annum. We had finally to decide upon the title of our magazine; and the company consisted not only of the seven members of the Brotherhood, but also of the painters Madox Brown, Cave Thomas, and Deverell, the sculptor Hancock, and two brothers Tupper. One of these, George, was a partner in the Firm which had undertaken to print the magazine. The other, John Lucas, who had been an Academy-student well known to Hunt, and aiming at sculpture rather than painting, was now Anatomical Designer at Guy's Hospital, and later on he became Drawing-master at Rugby School, where he died in 1879—a very capable conscientious man, quite as earnest after truth in form and presentment as any P.R.B., learned in his department of art, and with a real gift for poetry, which received partial expression, and as yet, it may be feared, next to no recognition.<sup>2</sup> The title *Thoughts towards*

<sup>1</sup> So stated in the P.R.B. Diary; Dante Rossetti, in my Section 43, gives a slightly different account.

<sup>2</sup> I believe he has left a large quantity of unprinted verse and prose. Some of it ought to be published. He issued anonymously a noticeable book, 1869, entitled *Hiatus, the Void in Modern Education*, by Outis. There was a little lyric of Tupper's on the Garden of Eden in ruinous

*Nature* was not viewed with much predilection. Mr. Cave Thomas had some while before proposed *The Seed*; and he now offered (with others) two new names, *The Scroll*, and *The Germ*. The last was ultimately approved by a vote of six to four.

*The Germ* No. 1 appeared on or about 1 January 1850. I do not propose to go minutely into the contents of the magazine—still less into its merits and demerits; but, as regards No. 1, I may perhaps as well recite the full contents. No authors' names were here given (a point contrary to my liking); but in subsequent numbers some names, and also some pseudonyms, were supplied on the wrappers. No. 1 opens with Woolner's poem *My Beautiful Lady*, and *Of my Lady in Death*, accompanied by an etching by Hunt, consisting of two separate compositions. Then come—*The Love of Beauty*, sonnet, by Madox Brown; *The Subject in Art*, No. 1, by J. L. Tupper; *The Seasons*, by Coventry Patmore (known first to Woolner, and by this time to most of us); *Dreamland*, by Christina Rossetti; *My Sister's Sleep* (being No. 1 of *Songs of one Household*), by Dante Rossetti; *Hand and Soul*, by the same; a Review, by myself, of Clough's poem, *The Bothie of Toper na Fuosich* (*Toper-na-Vuolich* in later issues); *Her First Season*, sonnet, also by myself; *A Sketch from Nature*, by J. L. Tupper; and *An End*, by Christina Rossetti. On the first page of the wrapper was a sonnet, my performance, intended to indicate the point of view from which the Præraphaelites contemplated the expression of ideas, and the record of appearances, whether in literature or in art. The last page contained a slight programme of what the nature of the contents of the magazine generally would be. I cannot say that it is effectively done, nor do I now remember who did it. I incline to think that Dante Rossetti made the first draft, which, being freely over-

decay, of which Dante Rossetti thought very highly. He compared it to Ebenezer Jones's lyric, "When the world is burning"; and said that, had it been the writing of Edgar Poe, it would have enjoyed world-wide celebrity.

hauled by others, got muddled more or less. It contains the following deliverance regarding Fine Art—a deliverance which shows to a certain extent the principle of the P.R.B., but in a very meagre and stunted condition :—

“The endeavour held in view throughout the writings on Art will be to encourage and enforce an entire adherence to the simplicity of Nature ; and also to direct attention, as an auxiliary medium, to the comparatively few works which Art has yet produced in this spirit.”

A different programme—which was not however much more than a topsy-turvy of the original one—appeared on the wrappers of Nos. 3 and 4, which were less directly under the control of myself as editor, or of the other members of the Brotherhood.

The issue of No. 1 of *The Germ* was 700 copies, for No. 2 only 500. About 100 of No. 1 were sold by the publishers, besides nearly or quite as many through our own exertions among friends and sympathizers ; No. 2 went off even less well than this. There was a fancy in our circle for speaking of the magazine as “The Gurm.” I am not quite sure how this originated, but believe that some outsider, seeing the magazine in a shop, and not realizing to himself what the title meant, asked for it in that form of pronunciation. For Nos. 3 and 4, which were brought out at the risk of our friendly printing-firm, a new title, *Art and Poetry*, was invented by a member of the firm, Mr. Alexander Tupper. I hardly know how these numbers sold, but am sure it was very little. With No. 4, issued towards the close of April 1850, the magazine came to an end. If not before, it was behind, its time. There were some laudatory notices of the various parts—in *The Dispatch*, *John Bull*, *The Guardian*, *The Critic*, Howitt’s *Standard of Freedom* ; a faintly patronizing one in the *Art Journal*, which disappointed us, as the editor, Mr. S. Carter Hall (whom Madox Brown was wont to call “Shirt-Collar Hall,” as designating the high respectability of his exterior) had previously written to one of us speaking of our

band as "the future great artists of the age and country"; others in *The Morning Chronicle*, *The Spectator*, and elsewhere. After balancing receipts and expenditure, we had to meet a printer's bill of £33 odd. This seems now a very moderate burden; but it was none the less a troublesome one to all or most of us at that period. In course of time it was cleared off, with the result—perhaps a salutary one—that none of us ever again made any proposal for publishing a magazine. For many years past *The Germ* has been a literary curiosity, fetching high fancy-prices; and more publishers than one have made proposals for re-printing it, but, owing to the dissent of one or other contributor, these proposals have had to be set aside. Even a single contribution to *The Germ*—the *Hand and Soul* of Dante Rossetti, as privately re-printed towards 1869—has been priced at no less than six guineas.

I will add here a couple of anecdotes about *Hand and Soul*, which is, from all points of view, a very interesting specimen of my brother's early work. The motto on my title-page is taken from it, and seems to me very appropriate, both to my brother's intrinsic quality as painter and poet, and to the material of these volumes. Readers of this tale may remember that it relates to a supposed Italian painter of the thirteenth century, Chiaro dell' Erma, who in 1239 saw his own soul in a visible female form, and painted her; a matter, by the way, which shows that Rossetti's knowledge of art-history was at this period extremely slight (unless indeed he voluntarily *chose* to go wrong, in the interest of his idea for the story), as it is totally impossible that, at so remote a date as 1239, any painter whatever should have produced a work at all corresponding with the details given concerning this picture. The Epilogue to the tale is written in a highly realistic tone, and contains many particulars about the picture, purporting for instance that it is to be found in the Pitti Gallery of Florence (had Rossetti known more about the likelihoods of such a case, he would have substituted the Accademia). There was a young lady of some fortune in

Worcestershire—Kidderminster, I think—who became the first wife of the landscape-painter Mr. Andrew McCallum; one of the prettiest and pleasantest little women I ever saw, with a most beaming splendid pair of eyes. She read *Hand and Soul* in *The Germ*, admired it, and believed it to be substantially true. Either before or after her marriage she was in Florence, and enquired at the Pitti for this picture, and was grievously disconcerted to find that nobody knew anything about it. In Mr. Sharp's book there is a story of some other lady who, at a much later date, professed to Rossetti that she had actually seen the picture at the Pitti, adding other relevant but not rigidly veracious details. This story also may be true; but I know (or at any rate remember) nothing about it, whereas I do know the story about Mrs. McCallum to be correct. My second anecdote relates to an etching which my brother undertook to do for *The Germ*. It has been more than once stated in print that this etching was to illustrate a different tale which he began writing, called *An Autopsychology*, suggested to him by an image of his own introduced into his poem *The Bride's Prelude*. The tale was not finished, but its beginning appears in his *Collected Works*, under the title *St. Agnes of Intercession*. The fact is that Millais offered to do for *The Germ* an etching for *The Autopsychology*; and he did it, and prints from the etching are still in existence. But the etching which Dante contemplated was for *Hand and Soul*, to be published in a number of *The Germ* later than that in which the tale itself had appeared. This etching—representing Chiaro in the act of painting his Soul—he drew in March 1850, and he got it bitten-in by Mr. Shenton the engraver; but, upon seeing a print of it on 28 March, he was so displeased with the result that, in his vehement mood, he tore up the impression, and scratched the plate over. I hardly think that I ever saw the design; would gladly do so now, were that but possible.

Though I do not want to dwell at any further length upon *The Germ*, I will specify the contributions of Dante Rossetti to Nos. 2, 3, and 4. They are—*The Blessed Damozel*, *The*

*Carillon, From the Cliffs—Noon, Pax Vobis*, and six *Sonnets for Pictures* (Memling, Mantegna, Giorgione, and Ingres).<sup>1</sup> *The Blessed Damsel*, as I have said, had been written in his nineteenth year. Of that first form of the poem no copy appears to be now extant. Before printing it in *The Germ* he added four stanzas. I might make some guess as to which they are; but it would only be a guess, and it shall not here trouble my readers.

Perhaps some of them might be amused to hear the dirge of *The Germ*, as it was chanted at the time by Mr. John Tupper.

“*Dedicated to the P.R.B. on the Death of ‘The Germ,’ otherwise known as ‘Art and Poetry.’*”

“Bring leaves of yew to intertwine  
 With ‘leaves’ that evermore are dead,  
 Those leaves as pallid-hued as you  
 Who wrote them never to be read:  
 And let them hang across a thread  
 Of funeral-hemp, that, hanging so,  
 Made vocal if a wind should blow,  
 Their requiem shall be anthemèd.

“Ah rest, dead leaves!—Ye *cannot* rest  
 Now ye are in your second state;  
 Your first was rest so perfect, fate  
 Denies you what ye then possessed.  
 For you, was not a world of strife,  
 And seldom were ye seen of men:  
 If death be the reverse of life,  
 You never will have peace again.

“Come, Early Christians, bring a knife,  
 And cut these woful pages down:  
 Ye would not have them haunt the town  
 Where butter or where cheese is rife!  
 No, make them in a foolscap-crown  
 For all whose inexperience utter  
 Believes High Art can once go down  
 Without considerable butter.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. W. M. Hardinge published, in *Temple Bar*, a very suggestive article on these sonnets.

"Or cut them into little squares  
 To curl the long locks of those Brothers  
 Præraphaelite who have long hairs—  
 Tremendous long, compared with others.<sup>1</sup>  
 As dust should still return to dust,  
 The P.R.B. shall say its prayers  
 That come it will or come it must—<sup>2</sup>

"A time *Sordello* shall be read,  
 And arguments be clean abolished,  
 And sculpture punched upon the head,  
 And mathematics quite demolished;  
 And *Art and Poetry* instead  
 Come out without a word of prose in,  
 And all who paint as Sloslua did  
 Have all their sloshy fingers frozen."<sup>3</sup>

## XVI.

## PAINTINGS AND WRITINGS, 1849—53.

FROM the early autumn of 1849 to the late spring of 1850 was a busy time with Dante Rossetti. Besides all the eagerness of planning and the flurry of working for *The Germ*, there was his small continental trip with Holman Hunt in the autumn, along with the production of a new picture for exhibition. Of the continental trip his Family-letters bear ample record in prose and verse. It was a

<sup>1</sup> This, I suppose, is a hit at my brother and Stephens, rather than other members of the P.R.B. The after reference to abolishing arguments and mathematics, and disliking sculpture, would also relate principally to my brother. He did not really dislike sculpture, but he much preferred painting.

<sup>2</sup> A line seems to be wanting in this stanza. I am copying from a transcript made at the time by myself, but I don't think the oversight can be mine.

<sup>3</sup> I have noted elsewhere that "slosh" was a term much in vogue with the Præraphaelites in their early days, to indicate a hasty, washy, indeterminate manner in painting, neglectful of severe form and accurate detail, and lavish of unctuous vehicle. "Sloslua" was Sir Joshua Reynolds (!)

valuable experience to him, but not one which he unreservedly enjoyed. He liked England and the English better than any other country and nation ; and he never crossed the sea without severe discomfort, or contemplated the crossing of it without repulsion. The few acquaintances that he made abroad played no part in his after-life. Strange to say, this small trip to Paris and Belgium was the longest, in point of duration and space combined, that he ever undertook.

I shall give here a brief account of the painting and designing work of Rossetti between the date in 1849 when he exhibited his first picture, and the date in 1854, 13 April, when Mr. Ruskin became personally known to him ; followed by a similar summary of his writing-work between the same dates. I name both in order of time as nearly as I can.

There was the beginning of a large oil-picture, with numerous figures, from a song in Browning's dramatic poem *Pippa Passes*, entitled *Hist, said Kate the Queen*. It was not finished, but a water-colour of the full composition exists. A pen-and-ink drawing, 1849, given to Millais, of *Dante drawing an Angel in Memory of Beatrice*—quite a different design from the subsequent water-colour, 1853, of the same subject. This pen-and-ink drawing is perhaps more decidedly marked by the "Præraphaelite" peculiarities of that date than anything else which Rossetti produced ; it is likewise his earliest subject taken from the *Vita Nuova*, to which he so frequently recurred afterwards. *The Laboratory* (from Browning's poem), which may be called his first water-colour. The pen-and-ink design *Hesterna Rosa*, with a motto from a song in Henry Taylor's *Philip van Artevelde*. The oil-picture, his second exhibited work, *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (or *The Annunciation*), now in the National Gallery. The landscape of trees etc. which he painted at Sevenoaks, while Mr. Hunt was in the same neighbourhood, in the very rainy autumn of 1850. I cannot recollect what was to have been the subject of this oil-picture. Long afterwards, 1872, he completed it under the title of *The Bower-meadow*. A water-colour, *Beatrice at a Marriage-feast denies Dante her Salutation*,

exhibited. The pen-and-ink design, *How they met Themselves*—a lover and his lady encountering their own wraiths in a forest, an incident ominous of approaching death. A crayon portrait of William Bell Scott. An exhibited water-colour, *Giotto painting the Portrait of Dante*. The scene, water-colour, from Dante's *Purgatorio*, where Beatrice says, "Guardami ben, ben son ben son Beatrice" He repeated this subject more than once, but always, I think, in varying compositions. A very interesting attempt at the beginning of 1853, not long persisted in, being an oil-picture in two compartments, life-sized half-figures, representing Dante's resolve to write the *Comedia* in memory of Beatrice. A pencil-head of Holman Hunt. The elaborate pen-and-ink design (begun in 1853, but not finished till 1858) of *Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee*. The beginning of the oil-picture named *Found*.

These are the chief, but by no means the only, products of the years of which we are speaking. They show a considerable range in choice of subject and mode of treatment. Regarding execution, it may be said in general terms that Rossetti continued to progress, both in force and in facility, but did not evince any great disposition for attaining strenuous mastery in draughtsmanship, or resource in the management of perspective, or of architectural or landscape accessory. As to draughtsmanship of human and animal form, he of course always recognized the high importance of this, whether he fully achieved it or not. But for the other matters he retained till the last a large measure of personal indifference, though necessarily conscious—none more so—that these also are required in order to make a picture conformable to the modern standard. The fact is that he *preferred* the tone of mind which governed the treatment of such elements of the subject in olden art. That they should convey their message in a suggestive way he thought fully requisite; that they should be rigorously realized by scientific rule or naturalistic presentment he did not care; and, if under a system of that sort they usurped the place of the main idea or of human

emotion and expressional force, he wished them well away. I do not aver that he was right in this view—the reader may judge for himself—but only that his view it assuredly was.

As to five of these works I may add a few details.

For *Ecce Ancilla Domini* Rossetti began a sketch on 25 October 1849. To supplement this picture of the Annunciation he intended to execute a companion-subject, the *Death of the Virgin*. The latter he never even began, having come to the conclusion that such themes were “not for the market.” Both pictures were to be chiefly white in hue. For the Annunciation—“The Virgin,” so he told me, “is to be in bed, but without any bedclothes on, an arrangement which may be justified in consideration of the hot climate; and the Angel Gabriel is to be presenting a lily to her.” This last point connects the picture with *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*; and the remark as to bedclothes testifies that, even in so ideal a subject as this, Rossetti was not unheedful of the Præraphaelite doctrine that the treatment should be consistent with probable facts. More persons than one sat for the head of the Angel—two models named Maitland and Lambert, and myself, at any rate; for the Virgin’s head, Christina, and also a Miss Love, who was I suppose a model. The head resembles Christina sufficiently to be accounted a likeness, but it is less like her than the head in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. Rossetti had all along purposed sending this picture to the Royal Academy; but at the last moment he altered his mind, and recurred to the National Institution (Free Exhibition). Its price was £50, but it remained unsold until the opening of 1853; when Mr. Francis McCracken, a ship-owner or packing-agent of Belfast, prompted by a friendly suggestion from Holman Hunt (from whom and from Madox Brown he had already bought some works), became the purchaser. At the end of 1850, on receiving the picture back from the National Institution, my brother again worked upon it, improving it materially by showing the Angel’s left hand—for at first the Angel, like the Virgin herself, had only one

hand visible. He did some further work when Mr. McCracken settled to buy the picture ; and to him he despatched it on 29 January 1853, altering the Latin title into *The Annunciation*, as a precaution against any charges (then equally rife and gratuitous) of "popery." "The blessed white eyesore" and "the blessed white daub" had come to be his terms for this now national possession, so long left on his hands. But his real sentiment on a question of art-work may have received truer expression in one of his Family-letters (September 1853)—"I shall never, I suppose, get over the weakness of making a thing as good as I can manage." Even as late as 1874 something was again done to the "white daub," but I think very little. He wrote : "It is best left alone, except just for a touch or two. Indeed, my impression on seeing it was that I couldn't do quite so well now !"

I have already referred to the very different reception which the Præraphaelite pictures of 1850 encountered from artists, press, and public, from that which had been accorded to the works of 1849. The pictures were still signed "P.R.B." ; and my brother had explained to his friend the sculptor Alexander Munro the meaning of those mysterious initials, which were not intended to be unduly pressed upon the attention of Academicians. Munro, a man of easy access to all sorts of people, divulged the matter to a brother-Scotchman, Angus Reach,<sup>1</sup> who was a light writer of those days ; and the latter published it in the *Illustrated London News*. Hence much of the fluster, and much of the virulence. When *Ecce Ancilla Domini* appeared in the National Institution, prior to the opening of the Royal Academy, the *Athenæum* came down upon it on 20 April, in the following terms—and even these

<sup>1</sup> I need scarcely say that I bear no sort of grudge against Mr. Reach, who died a great number of years ago ; but, to give my reader a moment's amusement, I will here retail a joke of Douglas Jerrold's which had, so far as I know, not yet got into print. Reach is a Gaelic name, properly pronounced as a dissyllable, Ree-ach ; but naturally Londoners were wont to read it as a monosyllable, Reech. Jerrold, being admonished to pronounce the name accurately, rejoined—"He is Ree-ach if you hear him, but Reech [retch, spue] if you read him."

were mild in comparison with what befell the *Christian Missionary persecuted by the Druids* of Holman Hunt, and the so-called *Carpenter's Shop* of Millais:—

“But what shall we say of a work hanging by the side of Mr. Newenham’s historical picture—which we notice less for its merits than as an example of the perversion of talent which has recently been making so much way in our school of art, and wasting the energies of some of our most promising aspirants? We allude to the *Ecce Ancilla Domini* of Mr. D. G. Rossetti (225). Here a certain amount of talent is distorted from its legitimate course by a prominent crotchet. Ignoring all that has made the art great in the works of the greatest masters, the school to which Mr. Rossetti belongs would begin the work anew, and accompany the faltering steps of its earliest explorers. This is archæology turned from its legitimate uses, and made into a mere pedant. Setting at nought all the advanced principles of light and shade, colour, and composition, these men, professing to look only to Nature in its truth and simplicity, are the slavish imitators of artistic inefficiency. Granted that in these early masters there is occasionally to be seen all that is claimed for them of divine expression and sentiment, accompanied by an earnestness and devotion of purpose which preserved their productions from oblivion—are such qualities inconsistent with all subsequent progress in historical excellence, or do these crotchet-mongers propose that the art should begin and end there? The world will not be led to that deduction by such puerilities as the one before us; which, with the affectation of having done a great thing, is weakness itself. An unintelligent imitation of the mere technicalities of old art—golden glories, fanciful scribblings on the frames, and other infantine absurdities—constitutes all its claim. A certain expression in the eyes of the ill-drawn face of the Virgin affords a gleam of something high in intention, but it is still not the true inspiration. The face of the Angel is insipidity itself. One arm of the Virgin is well drawn, and there is careful though timid workmanship in the inferior and accessorial part of the work, but this is, in many places, where it would have been better left out. Yet with this we have exhausted all the praise due, in our opinion, to a work evidently thrust by the artist into the eye of the spectator more with the presumption of a teacher than in the modesty of a hopeful and true aspiration after excellence.”

It is a pity that the authorities of the National Gallery have not yet seen their way to purchasing "Mr. Newenham's historical picture" (which represented *The Princes in the Tower*); the British public would then have the opportunity of realizing to themselves its marked superiority over *Ecce Ancilla Domini*.—The *Times* wrote in a tone partially resembling that of the *Athenæum*, but on the whole agreeable, recognizing the picture as "the work of a poet."

There is a little anecdote of this year which has never, I believe, been recorded, but which I understand to be indisputably true. About the time of the opening of the Academy-exhibition the Duke of Connaught had been born, and Queen Victoria could not visit the gallery; but, noticing all the hullabaloo in the newspapers about Millais's *Carpenter's Shop*, she required to have the picture sent to the Palace for her inspection. Whether Her Majesty liked it or not I have no idea.

As for the other four works which I have specified, the water-colour of *Giotto painting the Portrait of Dante* is in itself a noticeably complete invention, illustrating Dante's relation to painting and to poetry, present and future, and his love for Beatrice. But it was intended to be only the centre in a triptych, one wing representing Dante, as Priore in Florence, banishing the chiefs of both contending factions, and the other wing the exiled Dante and the Jester at the Court of Can Grande della Scala (the incident introduced into Rossetti's poem *Dante in Verona*). Rightly executed, this picture would have been his greatest work. The pencil head of Holman Hunt was done on 12 April 1853, when the Præraphæelites met together at Millais's house to produce portraits of one another, to be presented to their absent brother Woolner, who in July 1852 had gone to Australia; Millais doing Stephens and myself, and Hunt doing Millais and Dante Rossetti (I now possess the last). The design of *Mary Magdalene* was begun as a large picture towards 1860. This proceeded not very far, and was ultimately laid aside for good, nor do I know what became of the painted com-

mencement. A moderate-sized oil-sketch was completed about a year later. The oil-picture *Found* was a source of lifelong vexation to my brother, and to the gentlemen—some three or four in succession—who commissioned him to finish it. This work was nearly completed, but not quite, towards the close of Rossetti's life. An oil-monochrome, produced in May 1879, and showing the full composition, is extant. So far as the painting is concerned I will not here enter into further detail, but may spare a few words to a question often mooted—whether Rossetti did or did not take the subject of the picture from Mr. Bell Scott's poem of *Rosabell*. The facts are these.

Scott's poem relates to a country-girl, Rosabell (afterwards named Mary Anne), who, having gone to town as a milliner's assistant, becomes the mistress of a gentleman, Archer, and afterwards of another gentleman, Thorn, who supplies her with every luxury. Eventually he leaves her, and she goes from bad to worse, and dies a human wreck in a hospital. Before Thorn had left her, and therefore while she was still in high prosperity, her old rustic lover saw her. This scene is not introduced into the poem at all, but it is hinted at in an interview which the lover has with Rosabell's parents. One may surmise that the young man saw her flaunting in the Park or some such place, and did not so much as speak to or accost her. Now what does Rossetti's picture represent? It represents a rustic lover, a drover, who finds his old sweetheart at a low depth of degradation, both from vice and from penury, in the streets of London. He endeavours to lift her as she crouches on the pavement. This is an incident wholly diverse from Scott's incident. It may be said—If Rossetti had never read Scott's poem, he would not have thought of any such subject for his own picture. This may or may not be correct—I see no reason for thinking it correct; but at all events he has not taken his subject out of *Rosabell*. Mr. Scott's account of this matter, in his *Autobiographical Notes*, is highly inaccurate. He thinks that Rossetti trifled with him in June 1853 (the date of my brother's first visit to

Mr. Scott in Newcastle) by professing an intention of there-after painting this subject as coming from *Rosabell* (which it does not); whereas (says Scott) he had already begun the picture, and had already painted the drover's cart and calf. The truth is that he had *not* then begun the picture, and did not paint the cart and calf until the end of 1854; but he had, I fancy, *designed* the subject towards 1852, if not earlier. To sum up—Rossetti did not borrow his subject from Scott, and did not mislead Scott as to any details pertaining to the subject or the picture.

I was referring just now to the departure of Mr. Woolner to Australia in July 1852, and to the meeting of his Præraphaelite Brothers, in April 1853, to draw portraits of one another as a gift to him. Intermediate between these dates was a sonnet addressed by Dante Rossetti to Woolner. It has never yet been published, but deserves to find a place among his poems, and I give it here.

#### TO THOMAS WOOLNER.

*First Snow, 9 February 1853.*

Woolner, to-night it snows for the first time.  
 Our feet know well the path where in this snow  
 Mine leave one track: how all the ways we know  
 Are hoary in the long-unwonted rime!  
 Grey as their ghosts which now in your new clime  
 Must haunt you while those singing spirits reap  
 All night the fields of hospitable sleep—  
 Whose song, past the whole sea, finds counter-chime.  
 Can the year change, and I not think of thee,  
 With whom so many changes of the year  
 So many years were watched—our love's degree  
 Alone the same? Ah still for thee and me,  
 Winter or summer, Woolner, here or there,  
 One grief, one joy, one loss, one victory.

I find in Mrs. Wood's book a statement on another point, not better founded (so far as I am aware) than Mr. Scott's allegation. She says that Rossetti seceded from "sacred art" because he was repelled by the morbid character of a picture

of religious bearing by James Collinson, *St. Elizabeth of Hungary*. I do not know from whom Mrs. Wood derived this information, nor have I the least recollection of any such fact. My impression is that the prolonged lack of any purchaser for the *Annunciation* picture had much more to do with his resolve.

A letter from Rossetti, dated 24 February 1854, and printed by Mr. Scott, is of some interest as showing a certain cohesion between the Præraphaelite Brothers at that comparatively late time. Millais is here mentioned as the prime mover in a plan—which never came to anything—to get up a sketching-club on much the same system as that of the long-defunct Cyclographic Society. There were to be four Præraphaelite members—Millais himself, Hunt, Stephens, and Rossetti; also their close allies—Madox Brown, Charles Collins, Scott, Arthur Hughes, and Munro. In addition to these came the landscape-painters, Mark Anthony (a fine genius, not adequately valued now), Inchbold, and Carrick; the renowned designers Leech and Richard Doyle; the excellent animal-painter Wolf; the painter-amateur Michael Halliday; and two ladies, the Marchioness of Waterford and the Honourable Mrs. Boyle (known as E.V.B.). I was to be secretary. “The two ladies”—said Rossetti, and with good reason—“are both great in design.”

The writings of most importance belonging to this period are—*The Bride's Prelude*, *Dante at Verona*, *A Last Confession*, *Jenny*, *Dennis Sband* (a ballad of a rather light kind, not published), *The Burden of Nineveh*, *Stratton Water*, *Wellington's Funeral*, *The Staff and Scrip*, *Sister Helen*. Some of these however were not *finished* so early as the beginning of 1854. For instance, *Jenny* appears to have reached substantial completion about 1858, and something further was done to the poem in 1869, soon before its publication. *Sister Helen*, which may have been written in 1851 or early in 1852, was first printed in a Magazine—German, with an English issue supervised by Mrs. Mary Howitt, whom Rossetti now knew well—named *The Dussel-*

*dorf Artists' Annual*—I believe, the Part for 1854. It appeared with the initials H.H.H. (the letters stamped upon lead pencils of exceptional hardness), because, as once jotted down by Rossetti, "people used to say that my style was hard"—surely a stricture which does not come very near the mark, and has not been confirmed by a later generation of readers. Dr. Gordon Hake the poet has termed *Sister Helen* "the strongest emotional poem as yet in the language." The sonnet *Known in Vain*

("As two whose love, first foolish, widening scope")

was written in January 1853, and presents the conception (to repeat my own words used elsewhere) "of a man who in youth has been feeble in will, indolent and scattered, but who, when too late, wakes up to the duty and the privileges of work." This must be more or less autobiographical. It may be as well to say here that my brother was, in the years of his studentship and first practice as a painter, very much what is defined by the word "desultory" (a word which figures in this very sonnet); partly because he disliked routine-work and plodding application, and partly because he was divided between literary and pictorial interests, and often wanted to write when, to all appearance, he ought to have been drawing. I say "to all appearance," because it is now only reasonable to admit that in the long run his readings and writings in these early years proved to be of no less import in his career than drawing-work could have been. This state of things was irritating to our invalided and anxious father, who every now and then found occasion to reprehend Dante sharply, and even severely; and to reprehension my brother was at all times more than sufficiently stubborn. These rifts in cordial family-affection were always distressing when they occurred, though they soon healed over again. My brother, more than our father, was in the wrong; yet not so much in the wrong as at first sight he seemed. He grieved over the matter of our father's displeasure to his dying day.

Among letters addressed by Rossetti to Madox Brown, the latest which bears the cipher P.R.B. on the envelope is dated before March 1853. It has been stated that in this same year he first definitely decided to adhere to painting as his profession, to the comparative neglect of poetry. Perhaps it was before this, for the phrase "I have abandoned poetry" appears in a Family-letter dated 13 August 1852. An article in the *Athenæum*, 15 September 1894, mentions the fact that at one time he was near to undertaking the work of Telegraphy on the North-Western Railway, owing to his indifferent prospects, some while after the Præraphaelite movement began, of making a subsistence as a painter. This, which I had never previously seen stated in print, is correct. I do not remember much in detail about the matter, nor the exact date, which, but for the statement about Præraphaelitism, I should have fixed in a still earlier year. Perhaps it was in 1851, or the later part of 1850, when the want of any customer for the "white daub" was becoming irksome. If so, it is curious that the very same picture which first represented Rossetti in the National Gallery had gone nigh to ousting him from the profession. Of course the very straitened money-condition of the family generally was the main consideration. In 1851 there was our father incapacitated; our mother and Christina fagging over an unremunerative attempt at a day-school; Maria giving lessons in Italian etc., at two or three houses; myself with a small salary in the Excise-office, and another smaller stipend from the *Spectator*. I can recollect that Dante Rossetti went round once to some suburban station to see what a telegraph was like. The sight, and the moderate amount of information given to him, afforded him no satisfaction; but, feeling the family difficulties, he did not refuse to entertain the project. For one reason or another, and luckily for all parties concerned—including maybe the railway passengers—it very rapidly came to nothing.

Another curious circumstance is that in October 1849 Rossetti and his associates were pretty near settling in the

house, 16 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, which he did actually rent from Michaelmas 1862 onwards. Mr. Hunt and Mr. Stephens, along with Rossetti, looked over the house, and were much taken with it. The idea was that some P.R.B.'s and one or two of their closest friends—such as Munro and Deverell—should jointly tenant the house, and set up studios. To inscribe P.R.B. somewhere or other on the premises seemed a *sine quâ non*. A suggestion of mine that it might be written near the bell-pull, and interpreted by the uninitiated as "Please Ring Bell," was hailed as an opportune solution of the problem. The rent required was singularly low, £70; but we were so far impecunious that even this was regarded as beyond our conjoint means, and the idea of taking the house only lasted two or three days. It is moreover a fact that the building contained not a single good studio.

This reference to the studio which Rossetti did *not* take after leaving the one which he shared with Hunt in Cleveland Street leads me on to speaking of those which he *did* take. As I said, he was first at No. 72 Newman Street, a house where the ground-floor was occupied as a Dancing-Academy. The Dancing-Master failed to pay his rent; and, according to the oppressive system of those days, the goods of his subtenant Rossetti were seized to make good the default. The landlord was Mr. McQueen, a Printer in Tottenham Court Road. Dante and I carried away a considerable number of books, and I suppose some other things as well. This was probably not strictly legal—although, as regards the books, they were in fact as much mine as his, for all books were in common between us. Anyhow, the bulk of Dante's small belongings was confiscated, and appeared to his eyes no more. He then took a studio at No. 74, next door but one. It had a sort of slanting skylight, and few places were dimmer when a brisk rain came down pattering upon the glass. My brother was in this studio (still sleeping at No. 50 Charlotte Street) in October 1850, and perhaps for some while previously. At the beginning of 1851 he took, along with Deverell, the first floor at No. 17 Red Lion Square, a

house which happened to belong to Mr. North, the father of our eccentric literary crony. In May he gave notice to leave this apartment; and he accepted Madox Brown's obliging offer to accommodate him for a while in his own large studio, which was now in the house in Newman Street, No. 17, occupied by the sculptor Baily. Here he sat to Brown for the head of Chaucer in the very large picture—now in the museum of Sydney, Australia—of *Chaucer reading to the Court of Edward 3 the Legend of Custance*. The head was painted in one night, 11 P.M. to 4 A.M., and was never afterwards touched upon. This is recognizably like Chaucer, and is also a very fair portrait of Rossetti. It is held by some writers that Rossetti at this time resembled Chaucer; by others that he was like the Stratford bust of Shakespear; while Mr. Joseph Knight (who knew him later on) considers that the nearest affinity was to the great Italian actor Salvini—and I am more disposed to acquiesce in this last opinion. It was, I gather, on 23 November 1852 that Rossetti finally removed into Chambers of his own, and thus ceased to belong to the household at Charlotte Street, or rather then at Arlington Street. These Chambers were on the second floor of No. 14 Chatham Place, Blackfriars Bridge, a line of street demolished now many years ago. He had a very fine outlook on the river, and remained in this house until after the death of his wife in February 1862. There were a spacious painting-room, a commodious living-room, a small but well-lighted bedroom, and a little dusky passage-room between these two, chiefly used for storing books. In these Chambers I very frequently passed the evening with my brother, going thither from my office at Somerset House. Not seldom, up to the date of his marriage in 1860, I passed the night there as well.

## XVII.

MISS SIDDAL.<sup>1</sup>

DANTE ROSSETTI—though there was nothing of the Puritan in his feelings, nor in his demeanour or conversation—had no juvenile amours, *liaisons*, or flirtations. In 1850 he fell seriously in love.

Outside the compact circle of the Præraphaelite Brotherhood there was no man he liked better than Walter Howell Deverell, a youthful painter, son of the Secretary of the Government Schools of Design—artistic, clever, genial, and remarkably good-looking. One day—early in 1850, if not late in 1849—Deverell accompanied his mother to a bonnet-shop in Cranborne Alley (now gone—close to Leicester Square); and among the shop-assistants he saw a young woman who lifted down a bandbox or what not. She was a most beautiful creature, with an air between dignity and sweetness, mixed with something which exceeded modest self-respect, and partook of disdainful reserve; tall, finely formed, with a lofty neck, and regular yet somewhat uncommon features, greenish-blue unsparkling eyes, large perfect eyelids, brilliant complexion, and a lavish heavy wealth of coppery-golden hair. It was what many people call red hair, and abuse under that name—but the colour, when not rank and flagrant, happens to have been always much admired by Dante Rossetti, and I dare say by Deverell as well. All this fine development, and this brilliancy of hue, were only too consistent with a consumptive taint in the constitution. Her voice was clear and low, but with a certain sibilant tendency which reduced its attractiveness. Deverell got his mother to enquire whether he might be privileged to have sittings from this beauty, and the petition was granted. He painted from her the head of Viola in the picture, which he exhibited in the early spring of 1850, from Shakespear's *Twelfth Night*, *The Duke with*

<sup>1</sup> My brother always spelled the name thus. Some members of the family wrote "Siddall."

*Viola listening to the Court Minstrels*; he also drew from her the head of Viola in the etching of *Olivia and Viola* which appeared in the final number of *The Germ*. In the oil-picture Rossetti sat for the head of the Jester. It is a fair likeness, but rather grim.<sup>1</sup> I may as well add here that Hunt, not long afterwards, painted from the same damsel the Sylvia in his picture from the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and Millais his drowning *Ophelia*—but I fancy that both these heads, or at any rate the first, have been a good deal altered at a more recent date. This milliner's girl was Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal. When Deverell first saw her, she was, I believe, not fully seventeen years of age.<sup>2</sup>

The father of Miss Siddal was a Sheffield Cutler (Mr. Stephens says a watchmaker, but I hardly suppose that to be correct), who had removed to the neighbourhood of Newington Butts. His wife was alive in 1850, but not I think himself. I never saw her; but I did see once or twice Elizabeth's younger sister, a pleasing unmarried woman, and once her brother, who seemed a sensible well-conducted man, perhaps a trifle hard in manner. There was also a younger brother, said to be somewhat weak-minded. I find it stated that Mrs. Siddal had in some way been intimately associated with Madox Brown's second wife, a Miss Hill. This must have promoted a more than common cordiality which (after Elizabeth Siddal had, through a different train of circumstances, come into the artistic circle) subsisted between Mrs. Brown and herself, and only terminated with death. A neighbouring tradesman in Newington Butts, in Miss Siddal's infancy or early childhood, was named Greenacre.

<sup>1</sup> This picture, a large one, belonged, some while after Deverell's death, to Mr. Bell Scott. He sold it not very long before his decease, and I do not know who may be its present possessor.

<sup>2</sup> My brother, when his wife died on 11 February 1862, believed her to be twenty-nine years old; but I can distinctly recollect that her younger sister (whom they were wont to call "the Roman," from her aquiline nose, quite different from the rather noticeably rounded one of Elizabeth Eleanor) told him in my presence that the correct age was twenty-eight.

To the British public he is a murderer, more than commonly execrable, and duly hanged. To Miss Siddal he was a good-natured neighbour, who would on occasion help her toddling steps over a muddy or crowded crossing. Such is the difference in "the environment." Miss Siddal—let me say here once for all—was a graceful lady-like person, knowing how to behave in company. She had received an ordinary education, and committed no faults of speech. In our circle she was always termed "Lizzie," and I shall sometimes speak of her under that name.

Not long after Miss Siddal had begun to sit to Deverell, Dante Rossetti saw her, admired her enormously, and was soon in love with her—*how* soon I cannot exactly say. She had a face and demeanour very suitable indeed for a youthful Madonna; but I presume the head of the Virgin in the *Annunciation* picture had been painted before he knew her—and, under any circumstances, he would perhaps have taken this head from Christina, to keep the work in harmony with *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. The first painting in which I find the head of Miss Siddal is the rich little water-colour of 1850 (presented to Madox Brown) called *Rossovestita* (Red-clad). This is not greatly like Lizzie, but it can hardly have been done from any one else. Soon followed a true likeness in the water-colour, *Beatrice at a Marriage Feast denies Dante her Salutation*, which was exhibited in the winter of 1852-53. Here the Beatrice is Miss Siddal, and *every* other Beatrice he drew for some years following is also, I think, from her—likewise the Virgin in a water-colour of *The Annunciation*, 1852. She is here represented bathing her feet in a rivulet, and the composition bears of course no analogy to that of the oil-picture.

I do not know at what date a definite engagement existed between Miss Siddal and my brother—very probably before or not long after the close of 1851. That she was sincerely in love with him—he being most deeply and profusely in love with her—is readily to be presumed. Her character was somewhat singular—not quite easy to understand, and not

at all on the surface. Often as I have been in her company—and yet this was less often than might under the conditions be surmised—I hardly think that I ever heard her say a single thing indicative of her own character, or of her serious underlying thought. All her talk was of a “chaffy” kind—its tone sarcastic, its substance lightsome. It was like the speech of a person who wanted to turn off the conversation, and leave matters substantially where they stood before. Now and again she said some pointed thing, which might cast a dry light, but ushered one no further. She was not ill-natured in talk, still less was she scandal-mongering, or chargeable with volatility or levity personal to herself; but she seemed to say—“My mind and my feelings are my own, and no outsider is expected to pry into them.” That she had plenty of mind is a fact abundantly evidenced by her designs and water-colours, and by her verses as well. Indeed, she was a woman of uncommon capacity and varied aptitude. In what religious denomination she had been brought up I know not. Of her own, I fancy she had no religion. I should feel the more confident of this, were it not that Dante Rossetti, undefined as his faith was, had no sort of liking for irreligion in women. He had even a certain marked degree of prejudice against women who would not believe.

When one wants chivalrous generosity, one goes to Algernon Swinburne for it. This is what he once said of Miss Siddal<sup>1</sup>:—

“It is impossible that even the reptile rancour, the omnivorous malignity, of Iago himself, could have dreamed of trying to cast a slur on the memory of that incomparable lady whose maiden name was Siddal and whose married name was Rossetti. To one at least who knew her better than most of her husband’s friends the memory of all her marvellous charms of mind and person—her matchless

<sup>1</sup> In *The Academy*, 24 December 1892. Mr. Swinburne is here writing about Bell Scott’s *Autobiographical Notes*, and about an interpretation—more or less fanciful—which had been put upon a couple of phrases in that book.





*By Herself.*

ELIZABETH ELEANOR SIDDAL (ROSSETTI).

1853.

grace, loveliness, courage, endurance, wit, humour, heroism, and sweetness—is too dear and sacred to be profaned by any attempt at expression. The vilest of the vile could not have dreamed of trying ‘to cast a slur on her memory.’”

In these years, 1850 to 1854, Dante Rossetti was so constantly in the company of Lizzie Siddal that this may even have conduced towards the break-up of the P.R.B. as a society of comrades. He was continually painting or drawing from her, and pretty soon his example and incitement brought her on to designing and painting for herself. He gave her some instruction ; but, of systematic training of the ordinary kind, she appears to me to have had scarcely any. Certain it is that she had a gift very superior, in its quality if not in its actual outcome, to that which belongs to most female *débutantes*. The tone of her work was founded on that of Rossetti, with much less draughtsmanship, limper forms, and cruder colour. His own was partly crude, as well as brilliant, in the water-colours to which he chiefly confined himself in these years. On the other hand, she had much of sweet and chastened invention, and an ingenious romantic turn in it as well, and a graceful purity is stamped upon everything she did. One of her first productions was, I think, *We are Seven*, from Wordsworth’s poem. It is mentioned in a letter dated 12 January 1853. Then came a pen-and-ink design, rather large, of *Pippa and the Women of loose Life*, from Browning’s drama, one of Miss Siddal’s best drawings, and in essence a very good one ; the water-colour of the Wailing Ladies on the Seashore from the old ballad of *Sir Patrick Spens* ; another from *St. Agnes’ Eve*, by Tennyson ; another from the same great poet’s *Lady Clare* ; and not a few more. Her portrait was painted by herself in 1853-4. It is an absolute likeness, and the readers of this book may judge whether it is a laudable work of art. “Lizzie,” said my brother, writing to Madox Brown on 25 August 1853, “has made a perfect wonder of her portrait, which is nearly done, and which I think we shall send to the Winter Exhibition.” But this, I take it, was not carried out.

And again, in 1854: "Her fecundity of invention and facility are quite wonderful—much greater than mine." This may have been a lover's exaggeration, but it was not mere nonsense. She continued designing and painting for some years, not perhaps to any very large extent beyond 1857. Ill-health interfered, and stopped the settled practice. She did something however even after marriage; for a letter from Rossetti to Mr. Alexander Gilchrist, 18 June 1861, says: "She has been working very hard these few days, and made a beautiful water-colour sketch."

Of her verse—which is but scanty in quantity, so far as any traces remain to me—I will present one specimen. Possibly it had never yet been read by any one out of my family.

#### A YEAR AND A DAY.

Slow days have passed that make a year,  
 Slow hours that make a day,  
 Since I could take my first dear love,  
 And kiss him the old way:  
 Yet the green leaves touch me on the cheek,  
 Dear Christ, this month of May.

I lie among the tall green grass  
 That bends above my head,  
 And covers up my wasted face,  
 And folds me in its bed  
 Tenderly and lovingly  
 Like grass above the dead.

Dim phantoms of an unknown ill  
 Float through my tiring brain;  
 The unformed visions of my life  
 Pass by in ghostly train;  
 Some pause to touch me on the cheek,  
 Some scatter tears like rain.

The river ever running down  
 Between its grassy bed,  
 The voices of a thousand birds  
 That clang above my head,  
 Shall bring to me a sadder dream  
 When this sad dream is dead.

A silence falls upon my heart,  
And hushes all its pain.  
I stretch my hands in the long grass,  
And fall to sleep again,  
There to lie empty of all love,  
Like beaten corn of grain.

The letter from which I lately quoted, 25 August 1853, contains the first reference that I find to Miss Siddal's ill-health. It says, following the praise of her portrait, "she has been very ill though lately." The consumptive turn of her constitution became apparent; and from this time forth the letters about her are shadowed with sorrow which often deepens almost into despair. In a letter of March 1854 it is stated that Dante had introduced Lizzie to the Howitts—William and Mary Howitt, with their daughter Anna Mary (the painter, who afterwards became Mrs. Alfred Alaric Watts), then living in Highgate Rise; and that the Howitts were quite fond of her, and admired her productions. He had also introduced her to Christina; but was at times a little put out with the latter, thinking that her appreciation of Lizzie was not up to the mark. The Howitts had got her to see Dr. Wilkinson (the distinguished Homœopathist and writer), who pronounced that there was curvature of the spine, and the case was an anxious one, but not at all hopeless. From one of the Family-letters, June 1853, it will be observed that she was then painting in the Chatham Place Chambers, while Dante was in Newcastle.

My brother was a lover of boundless enthusiasm and fondness. He made no secret of his condition in the close circle of his nearer intimates. To all other persons he wrapped himself in impenetrable silence, not without some defiant tone; and he employed pet names for his fair one, of which Guggum, Guggums, or Gug, was the most frequent, if not the most euphonious. His Family-letters bear adequate marks of all this, but more especially his correspondence with Mr. Madox Brown. I observe, from some of her very few still extant letters, that Lizzie also addressed Rossetti

as "Gug." Possibly she invented the term, using it as a sort of short for "Gabriel."

I will here finish up with our lovable friend Deverell. He died on 2 February 1854, having for some months previously been a victim to Bright's disease. His age appears to have been only twenty-six. Had he lived a few years longer, he would not have failed to distinguish himself. Dante Rossetti was his chief intimate, but he was a favourite with all of our circle, and deserved to be so. He painted himself as the Duke in the *Twelfth Night* picture; Mr. Brown painted him finely as the gallant page in the *Chaucer* subject; and Mr. Holman Hunt made a very careful drawing of his handsome head. I cannot remember that my brother ever did the like.

## XVIII.

### JOHN RUSKIN.

THE relation of Mr. Ruskin to the Præraphaelite Brotherhood has often been misunderstood or mis-stated. It has been alleged—and this, in substance, I have already denied—that the young artists who called themselves Præraphaelites were prompted to their enterprise by reading some writing of Ruskin's; also that he encouraged them from the first. This is an error. There is nothing to show that he paid the least attention to their works while these were on exhibition in 1849 and 1850: in 1849, praised for the most part; in 1850, greeted with little other than extreme and envenomed abuse.

In 1851 Rossetti did not contribute to any of the Exhibitions. Sir John Millais sent to the Royal Academy three oil-pictures—*The Woodman's Daughter* (from a poem by Coventry Patmore), *The Return of the Dove to the Ark*, and *Mariana* (from Tennyson). Mr. Holman Hunt sent thither *Valentine rescuing Sylvia from Proteus*. It appears that Mr. Ruskin's father (a wealthy wine-merchant, whom I

remember well) liked *The Return of the Dove to the Ark*, and was minded to purchase it; but the picture was already sold. Mr. Patmore suggested to John Ruskin to write something about Millais and Hunt. Ruskin complied; and on 13 May a letter of his appeared in *The Times*, and was no doubt of very high service to the Præraphaelite cause. Neither this letter, nor the pamphlet *Præraphaelitism* published in the same year, referred in any way to the pictures of Rossetti exhibited in the two preceding years. It may be worth observing here that Mr. Ruskin, who was at that time a very earnest Protestant Christian, had had a vague idea, fostered by public rumour, that the Præraphaelites were leagued in some Puseyite or Roman-catholic propaganda. This error was now dispelled from his mind.

The first trace which I find of Ruskin in connexion with Rossetti comes in a letter which my brother addressed to Madox Brown on 1 March 1853. He here speaks of Mr. McCracken, the Belfast Packing-Agent who had bought the *Annunciation* picture, and who was a profound believer in "the Graduate" (as he constantly termed Ruskin); and Rossetti refers to "those sketches now exhibiting"—which were the *Giotto painting the Portrait of Dante*, the *Beatrice at a Marriage-feast denies Dante her Salutation*, and the *Rossovestita*. He then proceeds:—

"Ruskin has written him some extravagant praises (though with obtuse accompaniments) upon one of them—I cannot make out which—and McCracken seems excited, wanting it."

I presume the water-colour in question was most probably the *Beatrice* subject. Afterwards McCracken bought from my brother the water-colour (now in the Fine-Art Gallery of Oxford) named *Dante drawing an Angel in Memory of Beatrice*; and the sequel was this, as noted in another letter to Brown, 14 April 1854:—

"McCracken of course sent my drawing to Ruskin, who the other day wrote me an incredible letter about it, remaining mine respectfully (!), and wanting to call. I of course stroked him down

in my answer, and yesterday he called. His manner was more agreeable than I had always expected. . . . He seems in a mood to make my fortune."

Ruskin was then thirty-five years old, while my brother was not quite twenty-six. He called again very soon afterwards; and my brother was dining with him *en famille* on 25 April at Denmark Hill, Camberwell, when he had to be summoned away to attend the death-bed of our father, who expired on the 26th. These were days of great trouble to Dante Rossetti. Immediately after our father's funeral he found it necessary to run down to Hastings for a while, to join Miss Siddal, who was in a very suffering state of health. They were also days of trouble to Mr. Ruskin, for a different sort of reason, on which I need not dwell here. He went abroad much about the same time when my brother left for Hastings, and for three or four months they met no more, but interchanged some letters.

Mr. Ruskin took keen delight in Rossetti's paintings and designs. He praised freely, and abused heartily, both him and them. The abuse was good-humoured, and was taken good-humouredly; still it was enough to nettle many a nature more enduring than that of Rossetti. Mr. Ruskin found him over-confident in the use of unsafe pigments, capricious in his character and his products, and careless of his surroundings: his room was never orderly. Dante Rossetti, like most artists of any inventive genius, was at bottom scornful of art-critics. He was not in the least self-satisfied as to his own performances—on the contrary, he looked upon most of them with a good deal of disfavour, as being inadequate expressions of the adequate idea which was within him; still he considered that an artist generally knows what he is about much better than an outsider can instruct him. Besides, the idea, and the method of presenting it, were his own, and, for better for worse, his own they must remain. I consider that in these years there was no irritation whatever between Ruskin and Rossetti. They were heartily

friendly, and indeed heartily affectionate, and took in good part, with mutual banter and amusement, whatever was deficient or excessive in the performances of the painter, or in the comments of the purchaser and critic. The only counteraction to their entire cordiality lay in the fact that Madox Brown soon got to hate the very name of Ruskin. He considered himself both slighted and damnified by the absolute silence which that pre-eminent and most influential art-critic, in all his published writings, preserved as to Brown's works, while lauding some other painters who might be deemed fully equal to himself, and several who were most manifestly inferior. Rossetti, who was zealous in friendship, endeavoured to bring about a different condition of things, but did not succeed; so he had, in some degree, to steer a middle course between his warm feelings for Brown on one side and for Ruskin on the other. Ruskin and Rossetti saw each other constantly, and kept up an active correspondence as well. The letters of the former are still rather numerous, and are full of diverting "digs" at Rossetti's designs and paintings. Rossetti's responses are not within my cognizance, but, if they did not "give as good as he got," I have misapprehended his character, and his settled habits of mind and act.

From an early date in their acquaintance Mr. Ruskin undertook to buy, if he happened to like it, whatever Rossetti produced, at a range of prices such as the latter would have asked from any other purchaser, and up to a certain maximum of expenditure on his own part. If he did not relish a work, Rossetti could offer it to any one else. I cannot imagine any arrangement more convenient to my brother, who thus secured a safe market for his performances, and could even rely upon not being teased to do on the nail work for which he received payment in whole or in part. In this respect Ruskin appears to have been always friendly and accommodating, and Rossetti not unduly troublesome. He availed himself of Ruskin's easy liberality, without abusing it. In fact he was made comfortable in his professional

position ; though it should be understood that his prices were very moderate, and his income was small in proportion, and he was often enough in straits to meet some current demand. He now ceased to exhibit in any of the ordinary galleries, and to this system he ever afterwards adhered. The arrangement with Mr. Ruskin set him free to consult his own likings in the matter, and may have had much to do with his resolve.

Ruskin's permanent opinion of Rossetti as a painter appears in the following words :—

“I believe Rossetti's name should be placed first on the list of men, within my own range of knowledge, who have raised and changed the spirit of modern art ; raised in absolute attainment, changed in direction of temper.”

And again :—

“Rossetti was the chief intellectual force in the establishment of the modern Romantic School in England.”

I will extract here a few passages from the letters which Mr. Ruskin wrote to my brother. They are scrappy, but tend to show how the two very diverse natures were getting on together ; and here and there comes a touch of that tender and exquisite amiability which has made Ruskin (if his genius had not done it for him) a man apart. He hardly ever dated his letters ; but I shall add dates which are nearly enough right for the present purpose.

(October 1854) “I forgot to say also that I really do covet your drawings as much as I covet Turner's ; only it is useless self-indulgence to buy Turner's, and useful self-indulgence to buy yours. Only I won't have them after they have been more than nine times rubbed entirely out—remember that.”—(24 April 1855) “It may be as well that you should keep this letter, if you *can* keep anything safe in that most disreputable litter of yours.”—(June 1855) “At the eleventh hour I am going to put off my lesson of to-morrow [*i.e.*, a little friendly instruction, pretty frequently repeated, which, at Mr. Ruskin's request, Rossetti gave him in the use of water-colour. I

think the instruction extended not much beyond the attendance of Ruskin at times when my brother was in the act of painting, with question and answer as to the why and wherefore of his modes of work]; for I find my eyes to-day quite tired with an etching I expected to have finished, and haven't. But, as you have that drawing to finish, you will still be kept in town now; so I may have my lesson when this nasty etching is done."—(July 1855) "Can you dine with us on Thursday at 6? (and not be *too* P.R.B., as Stanfield is coming too!). But I've no other time for a chat."—(November 1855) "Please oblige me in two matters, or you will make me ill again. Take all the pure green out of the flesh in the *Nativity* I send, and try to get it a little less like worsted-work by Wednesday. I want *The Passover* in such a state as it may be in, and the sketch of *Passover*."—(November 1855) "It's all *your own pride*, not a bit of fine feeling, so don't think it. If you wanted to oblige *me*, you would keep your room in order, and go to bed at night. All your fine speeches go for nothing with me till you do that."—(May 1856) "I forgot to say to you when I saw you that, if you think there is anything in which I can be of any use to Miss Siddal, you have only to tell me. I mean, she might be able, and like, as the weather comes finer, to come out here sometimes to take a walk in the garden, and feel the quiet fresh air, and look at a missal or two; and she shall have the run of the house. And, if you think she would like an Albert Durer or a photograph for her own room, merely tell me, and I will get them for her. And I want to talk to you about her, because you seem to me to let her wear herself out with fancies, and she really ought to be made to draw in a dull way sometimes from dull things."—(January 1857) "I was put out to-day, as you must have seen, for I can't hide it when I am vexed. I don't at all like my picture now [*possibly* the oil-picture of *St. Katharine*—a mediæval painter painting a lady as this saint]. The alteration of the head from the stoop forward to the throw back makes the whole figure quite stiff and stupid; besides, the off-cheek is a quarter of a yard too thin. That *Magdalene* is magnificent to my mind in every possible way; it stays by me." [This is the design of *The Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee*.]

In one of these passages the reader will have observed the reference to Miss Siddal. Soon after Ruskin had returned

to London from his visit to the Continent in 1854, Rossetti brought him acquainted with Miss Siddal, and with the designs and water-colours she was producing. Ruskin admired her much, and liked her intensely ; and he took a most hearty interest and pleasure in the refinement and feeling displayed in her designs, although far from blind (as will have been perceived) to their executive shortcomings. A letter from Rossetti to Madox Brown, 13 April 1855, says that she and he had been spending a day at the house of the Ruskin family :—

“All the Ruskins were most delighted with Guggum. John Ruskin said she was a noble, glorious creature, and his father said by her look and manner she might have been a Countess.”

Immediately afterwards Mr. Ruskin committed one of those unnumbered acts of generosity by which he will be remembered hardly less long than by his vivid insight into many things, and his heroic prose. He wanted to effect one of two plans for her advantage—either to purchase all her drawings one by one, as they should be produced, or else to settle on her an annual £150—he taking in exchange her various works up to that value, and retaining them, or (if preferred) selling some of them, and handing over to her any extra proceeds. This latter plan was carried into actual effect by 3 May. It will easily and rightly be supposed that Rossetti used to find funds for Miss Siddal whenever required ; but his means were both small and fitful, and Ruskin's scheme was of some relief and of great satisfaction to him. How long it continued I am not sure. There is a letter from Mr. Ruskin, dated I fancy in or about 1857, containing the following passage, which I need only preface by saying that he constantly applied the fancy-name “Ida” to Miss Siddal, taking it no doubt from Tennyson's *Princess* :—

“I shall rejoice in Ida's success with her picture, as I shall in every opportunity of being useful either to you or her. The only feeling I have about the matter is of some shame at having allowed

the arrangement between us to end as it did ; and the chief pleasure I could have about it now would be her simply accepting it as she would have accepted a glass of water when she was thirsty, and never thinking of it any more."

From this I infer that Miss Siddal had then discontinued delivering her designs or paintings to Mr. Ruskin—probably because her very frail state of health prevented her producing them with any regularity ; and that, being thus unable to fulfil her part in the scheme, she, and also my brother as her adviser, renounced the money-benefit hence accruing to her.

Meantime, for health's sake, she had been abroad. I have already referred to the medical opinion obtained from Dr. Wilkinson. Towards June 1855 another opinion was obtained from Dr. Acland of Oxford, to whom Ruskin recommended her. The Doctor and others, including a lady of the Pusey family, received her with great attentions. He opined that her lungs were nearly right, the chief danger consisting in "mental power long pent up, and lately overtaxed." He advised her to leave England before cold weather set in ; and this she did towards the latter end of September, having as companion a Mrs. Kincaid, a cousin of ours, who knew something of French and Continental life. This lady was only recently known to us. She had (I think) been discovered by my uncle Henry Polydore as being a member of the Pierce family, at a time when, in consequence of an informality in the will of my grand-aunt Harriet Pierce (who died in 1849), it became requisite to ferret out her various next of kin. I remember Mrs. Kincaid pretty well towards 1855—a matronly sort of person, aged forty or upwards ; her husband much better, a sharp-looking solicitor. He took a decided fancy to Dante Rossetti, and haunted not a little his studio and his dinner-hour—his dinner, while he tenanted his Chambers in Chatham Place, being almost invariably taken at some eating-house. Miss Siddal with Mrs. Kincaid went to Nice ; she was also for a while in Paris, and Dante, with his friend

Munro, saw her there in connexion with the Great Exhibition of that year, he returning in October. For some reason or other—I am not sure that I ever understood it well—she lost her liking for Mrs. Kincaid. Dante of course sided with Lizzie, and we saw the married couple no more. It may have been in the late Spring of 1856 that Miss Siddal returned to London, without any such material renovation of health as had been hoped for. From this time onward variations occurred at intervals; but as a whole it must be said that there was a continual decline of vital force, and often she was distressingly ill.

I may here add that my own first sight of Mr. Ruskin was on 25 November 1854, when he was delivering a lecture at the Architectural Museum. I afterwards saw him pretty frequently, often in company with my brother, and I regarded him with warm liking and respect both as man and as writer and critic. As a public speaker, Ruskin was a subject of highest admiration to my brother, who never, I think, addressed a general audience at all. That Rossetti wholly avoided and shrank from any such form of self-display is certain. It is not by any means equally certain to me that, if he had chosen to make the attempt, he would not or could not have succeeded. His address was good, his voice excellent, his manner adapted for exciting sympathy and warmth, his ideas were clear and well to hand, and he could converse extremely well whenever he liked.

Some years ago a copy of a letter from my brother to Mr. McCracken, 15 May 1854, came into my hands. It shows so clearly the opinion which he entertained upon various questions of art, about the time when he first knew Ruskin, that I shall here introduce a few sentences of it :—

“I believe colour to be a quite indispensable quality in the *highest* art, and that no picture ever belonged to the highest order without it; while many, by possessing it—as the works of Titian—are raised certainly into the highest *class*, though not to the very highest grade of that class, in spite of the limited degree of their other great qualities. Perhaps the *only* exception which I should be inclined to

admit exists in the works of Hogarth, to which I should never dare to assign any but the very highest place, though their colour is certainly not a prominent feature in them. I must add however that Hogarth's colour is seldom other than pleasing to myself, and that for my own part I should almost call him a colourist, though not aiming at colour. On the other hand, there are men who, merely on account of bad colour, prevent me from thoroughly enjoying their works, though full of other qualities. For instance, Wilkie, or Delaroche (in nearly all his works, though the *Hémicycle* is fine in colour). From Wilkie I would at any time prefer a thoroughly good engraving—though of course he is in no respect even within hail of Hogarth. Colour is the physiognomy of a picture; and, like the shape of the human forehead, it cannot be perfectly beautiful without proving goodness and greatness. Other qualities are its life exercised; but this is the body of its life, by which we know and love it at first sight. . . . I have once seen a small picture by the H. Wallis you ask about, and should venture to say that any work of his must have some degree of value, if not a very high one—at any rate something preferable to any *Mill* by any Brandard, to any 'vacant' thing whatever by John Bridges, or even to anything I could suppose likely to fall under Redgrave's notice while 'returning from church.'"

## XIX.

## WORK IN 1854-55-56.

IN these years the painting-work of Rossetti had its source principally in Dantesque or in general romantic themes, with some sacred subjects interspersed, and his method was water-colour. He produced a triptych of *Paolo and Francesca*; *The Passover in the Holy Family*; a portrait of himself; *Launcelot and Guenevere at the Tomb of Arthur*; a head of Browning, a fine likeness, doing justice to so great a sitter; *The Chapel before the Lists*; *Dante's Dream*; the five designs to *Tennyson's Poems*; *Eliza Polidori* (oil-portrait); *The Blue Closet*; *The Wedding of St. George*; *Bonifazio's Mistress*; *The Tune of Seven Towers*; and several other

works. Some of them were prolonged into the year 1857. He also made the water-colour preparatory to his oil-triptych for Llandaff Cathedral—*The Seed of David*. Mr. Ruskin became the owner of a good proportion of these productions—by no means of all.

Rossetti's invention was fertile, and—according to the varying and sometimes merely fanciful themes—appropriate; his colour high and brilliant, and, though at times a little over-positive, not forced. Allowing himself very free scope in his treatment of the subjects, he yet seldom if ever painted a figure without taking it from Nature. Miss Siddal was his model for all the leading female personages. Of thoughtfully considered or elaborately realized light and shade, or of diversified planes in the composition, there is very little in any of these works. Rossetti's sympathies did not go in such directions, and he was never an adept at these highly important processes of the art—and at this period still less an adept than he became later on.

To some of the above-named works a few details may here be spared.

The *Paolo and Francesca* triptych, begun as a design in October 1849, shows the Lovers' Kiss, and their souls in Hell, and in the centre Dante or some other figure. He repeated these compositions more than once. Mr. James Leathart, of Gateshead-on-Tyne, owns the best version of them, and a very fine example it is of Rossetti's power in pathos and in colour. *The Passover in the Holy Family*, a prime favourite with Mr. Ruskin, had also been invented as far back as July 1849. This likewise was intended to be part of a triptych; the other subjects were to be—*The Virgin planting a Lily and a Rose*, and *The Virgin in the House of John*. The central subject remained uncompleted, though moderately advanced; the second was (I think) never done; the third was eventually treated as a separate water-colour painting, one of his very best. The portrait of Rossetti himself, in Indian ink executed with pen or brush, is dated 20 September 1855, and is now the property of Mr. Charles Fairfax Murray.

I think it superior to all other renderings, and, by Mr. Murray's obliging permission, it forms our frontispiece. The *Dante's Dream*, which was purchased by Miss Heaton of Leeds (who died at Christmas 1894), is the same subject as the large oil-picture now in the Walker Gallery of Liverpool, but not at all the same composition.

The Tennyson designs, which were engraved on wood, and published in the Illustrated Tennyson in which Millais, Hunt, Mulready, and others, co-operated, have in the long run done not a little to sustain my brother's reputation with the public. At the time they gave him endless trouble, and small satisfaction. Not indeed that the invention or the mere designing of these works was troublesome to him. He took great pains with them, but, as what he wrought at was always something which informed and glowed in his mind, he was not more tribulated by these than by other drawings. It must be said also that himself only, and not Tennyson, was his guide. He drew just what he chose, taking from his author's text nothing more than a hint and an opportunity. The trouble came in with the engraver and the publisher. With some of the doings of the engraver—Dalziel, not Linton whom he found much more conformable to his notion—he was grievously disappointed. He probably exasperated Dalziel, and Dalziel certainly exasperated him. Blocks were re-worked upon, and proofs sent back with rigour. The publisher Mr. Moxon was a still severer affliction. He called and he wrote. Rossetti was not always up to time, though he tried his best to be so. In other instances he was up to time, but his engraver was not up to his mark. I believe that poor Moxon suffered much, and soon afterwards he died; but I do not lay any real blame upon my brother, who worked strenuously and well. As to our great poet Tennyson—who also ought to have counted for something in the whole affair—I gather that he really liked Rossetti's designs when he saw them, and he was not without a perceptible liking and regard for Rossetti himself, so far as he knew him (they had first met at Mr. Patmore's house in December 1849); but

the illustration of *St. Cecilia* puzzled him not a little, and he had to give up the problem of what it had to do with his verses. If I may be allowed to express my opinion of so great a man as Tennyson—whom I met on several occasions, and who honoured me by much freedom of converse—I should say that he had not any particular insight into matters of pictorial art as such, although he appreciated and prized the art as one of the forms in which the mind of man expresses beautiful ideas. I did not observe him to be at all a “connoisseur.” Rossetti put this affair of the wood-blocks in entertaining terms in a letter to Mr. Bell Scott dated February 1857:—

“I have designed five blocks for Tennyson, some of which are still cutting and maiming. It is a thankless task. After a fortnight’s work my block goes to the engraver, like Agag delicately, and is hewn to pieces before the Lord Harry.

“ADDRESS TO THE DALZIEL BROTHERS.

“O Woodman, spare that block,  
Oh gash not anyhow!  
It took ten days by clock,  
I’d fain protect it now.

“*Chorus*—Wild Laughter from Dalziel’s Workshop.”

As I am here speaking of Tennyson, I take occasion to mention two sketches of him which my brother made; not of superior import as works of art, yet from all points of view highly interesting. It was on 27 September 1855 that the Brownings, being then for a while in London, invited two or three friends to the house they were occupying, 13 Dorset Street, to meet Tennyson, who had undertaken to read aloud his poem of *Maud*, recently published. The audience was a small one, the privilege accorded to each individual all the higher: Mr. and Mrs. Browning, Miss Browning, my brother, and myself, and I think there was one more—either Madox Brown, or else Hunt or Woolner. The latter had returned to London from Australia in the autumn of 1854. Tennyson,

seated on a sofa in a characteristic attitude, and holding the volume near his eyes (for he was decidedly short-sighted, though one would hardly think so from his descriptive poems), read *Maud* right through. My brother made two pen-and-ink sketches of him, and gave one of them to Browning. So far as I remember, the Poet Laureate neither saw what Dante was doing, nor knew of it afterwards. His deep grand voice, with slightly chaunting intonation, was a noble vehicle for the perusal of mighty verse. On it rolled, sonorous and emotional. Rossetti, according to Mr. Hall Caine, spoke of the incident in these terms: "I once heard Tennyson read *Maud*; and, whilst the fiery passages were delivered with a voice and vehemence which he alone of living men can compass, the softer passages and the songs made the tears course down his cheeks." I remember that on a later occasion Tennyson told me that he knew no one so well-fitted as himself for reading Milton aloud; as he had a deep chest and long-drawn breath, and could finish the weighty periods of many lines together without a second inhalation. After Tennyson and *Maud* came Browning and *Fra Lippo Lippi*—read with as much of sprightly variation as there was in Tennyson of sustained continuity. Truly a night of the gods, not to be remembered without pride and pang.

*The Seed of David* was an important matter in my brother's professional life. The Cathedral at Llandaff was in 1856 undergoing a complete restoration. One of the Architects employed was Mr. John P. Seddon, who had already become, and always continued, a very steady friend to Rossetti, alert in promoting his interests whenever he could. A painting was wanting for the reredos of the renewed Cathedral; and Mr. John Seddon, seconded by his elder brother Thomas the painter, bethought himself of Rossetti. Mr. Thomas Seddon had lately been abroad in the East with Mr. Holman Hunt, and had painted, among other things, an admirably faithful view of Jerusalem, which is now in the National Gallery, consigned thither by a public subscription in which my brother bore an active part. This subscription took place after the

melancholy death of Mr. Seddon in Cairo, to which city he had gone in the autumn of 1856. There he died of dysentery very soon after his arrival, and a life full of brightness, and a career full of high promise, were suddenly cut short at the early age of thirty-five. In March 1856, prior to starting for Egypt, Mr. Thomas Seddon brought round to Rossetti's studio a Member of Parliament connected with Llandaff, Mr. Henry Austin Bruce (the late Lord Aberdare); and it was agreed that my brother should undertake the painting of the reredos for a sum of £400. The subject—named by himself *The Seed of David*, though other titles have often been applied to it—had to take the form of a triptych. In the centre is the Infant Christ adored by a Shepherd and a King; on one side His ancestor the shepherd David standing forth to battle with Goliath; on the other side, the same ancestor as King harping to the glory of Jehovah. The work was completed in 1864, and continues to occupy its place in the Cathedral.

The water-colours of *The Blue Closet*, *The Wedding of St. George*, and *The Tune of Seven Towers*, bring us into a different relation of life and work. They may be referred to that phase of Rossetti's painting which more especially fostered his connexion with certain young men—now of world-wide fame—at Oxford University, and which led to his own pictorial experiments in Oxford. One of these young men, William Morris, took from Rossetti, as titles for poems, the first and the third of these titles for pictures: the poems however are not founded on the pictures in any material degree. Both pictures and poems are pure phantasies, and independent phantasies.

To some eyes Rossetti's chivalric-romantic inventions are mere knell-echoes of chivalry, or mere fleeting suggestions of romance. It is interesting to observe what was one quarter in which they were very differently construed. There was a deeply devout Methodist, James Smetham, who was also a painter. Painting was his profession and his enjoyment; religion was his life. He produced many works, not of large dimension, full of fine threads of imagination, and of refined

though not powerful art. He is at present better known by his remarkable Letters, published in 1892. He appears to have seen something of Rossetti in 1843, at Cary's Academy ; again after 1851 ; and more especially from 1863 through all the ensuing years, until his own mental and physical breakdown, owing to overstrained religious notions, withdrew him from all society. This, expressed in a letter of December 1865, is what he thought of Rossetti's works of the class referred to :—

“Your St. Georges and Sir Galahads are almost the only modern pictures of heroes that reach the Christian ideal, in my judgment, as to expression. Not to be invidious in naming artists, the modern knight is a proud, vain, truculent rascal. Yours are ‘renewed in the spirit of their minds’—couldn't do a mean or wrong thing—fear nothing and nobody ; but would not hurt a fly or strike an unnecessary blow. So I greatly esteem and respect them.”

An earlier letter, September 1860, relates in detail to the water-colour lately mentioned of *The Wedding of St. George* :—

“One of the grandest things, like a golden dim dream. Love ‘credulous all gold,’ gold armour, a sense of secret enclosure in ‘palace-chambers far apart’ ; but quaint chambers in quaint palaces, where angels creep in through sliding-panel doors, and stand behind rows of flowers, drumming on golden bells, with wings crimson and green. There was also a queer remnant of a dragon's head which he had brought up in a box.”

As to writing, there was not in these years anything of such importance as to claim record here. Dante Rossetti adhered faithfully to his resolve that he would for the present be a painter and not a poet.

## XX.

OXFORD MEN AND WORK—BURNE-JONES, MORRIS,  
SWINBURNE.

THE circle of Rossetti's intimacies had gradually changed, and by the middle of 1856 a new and stimulating environ-

ment was his. I will go back upon my steps a little, prior to going forward again.

As friends towards the year 1847 I specified the Heimanns, Munro, Major Calder Campbell, and Bell Scott. Then came Madox Brown, Hunt, and Millais; and, in the train of the last two, the other Præraphaelites—Collinson, Woolner, and Stephens, along with Deverell and the Tupper, or more especially John L. Tupper. There were also—William North; James Hannay; the Seddons, with the portrait-painter Lowes Dickinson, and the glass-painter John R. Clayton; the Howitts and Miss Barbara Leigh Smith (Mrs. Bodichon); the Patmores, along with the Orme family (Mrs. Orme being sister to Mrs. Patmore), and the Irish poet William Allingham; the painters George Price Boyce and Arthur Hughes; and the Brownings. Then came Ruskin and his connexion—including the Working Men's College, in which my brother took a drawing-class for two or three years, ending towards the close of 1858. Madox Brown then conducted it for a while; yet Rossetti's link with the College was not entirely broken, and he was still doing something there in February 1862.

Some of these were now dead: Deverell, North, and Thomas Seddon. Major Campbell and the first Mrs. Patmore did not long survive. Others, for one reason or another, had passed wholly or chiefly out of my brother's ken—Millais, Collinson, and the hospitable Orme family. Hannay, the brilliant novelist, writer, and talker, was now or soon afterwards settled in Edinburgh, with his beautiful and admirable wife (highly valued by Rossetti), and his young family. The Brownings were mostly in Florence, John Seddon in Wales, Allingham in Ireland, and Scott in Newcastle. Hunt, owing to his absences in the East and other circumstances, was not very often seen; nor yet the Heimanns, Stephens, Tupper, Dickinson, Clayton, the Howitts, Miss Barbara Smith, or Patmore. There remained Madox Brown and Ruskin constantly but separately; Munro, Woolner, and Boyce, pretty frequently. Of course there were others as well, but hardly

any who counted as more than casual and pleasant acquaintances. Robert Brough, Charles Bagot Cayley, Whitley Stokes, and George Augustus Sala, were among these.

The first mention which I find of Burne-Jones—the Sir Edward Burne-Jones of our present day—is in a letter from my brother to Brown, dated 6 June 1856. This young Oxford student—a Birmingham man destined for the Church, but with a strong bias towards art, which found vent at this time in romantic pen-and-ink designs of remarkable richness and quality—had conceived a high idea of Rossetti's powers. He called upon him, showed a design or two, and was forthwith recognized by Rossetti—with an instinctive power, in which he had few rivals, of seeing at a glance what is intrinsically excellent, as well as what is predestined to remain second-rate—as a born artist of quite exceptional faculty, and capable of doing consummate work. He urged Mr. Jones to become a professional painter. Jones obeyed the external, and also the internal, monitor, and the world is the richer for his decision.

Through Burne-Jones my brother soon came to know William Morris, and soon afterwards—but this I think was only in Oxford—Algernon Charles Swinburne. It is a natural temptation to say something in detail about these three most highly distinguished men—their looks in youth, their character, demeanour, and attainments. I shall however forbear. Their personality, along with their work, forms part of the annals of England, and indeed of Europe, in the nineteenth century, and my hand might prove infirm to limn them as they were and are.

Prior to his knowledge of Burne-Jones, my brother had already been invited to take some part in art-work in Oxford. In 1855 the Oxford Museum was in course of erection, much under the influence of Mr. Ruskin, and his theories in architecture and decoration; and the architect, Mr. Benjamin Woodward, in July 1855, asked Rossetti to do some of the designing-work in connexion with it. Mr. Woodward was an Irishman, of excellent ability and highly refined taste.

He was the very reverse of what Irishmen are currently assumed to be, and was (without any exception, unless it be that of Mr. Cayley, the translator of Dante, Petrarca, and Homer) the most modest, retiring, and shyly taciturn man of noticeable talent whom it has ever been my fortune to meet. He was of handsome and rather stately presence, eminently gentle and courteous. His health was poor, and he died in 1861, when he had barely attained middle age. Among other edifices, he built a very elegant Insurance-office, in Venetian Gothic, almost opposite my brother's Chambers in Chatham Place. It has long been demolished, and London contains perhaps nothing equal to it in its own way. I do not think that my brother did anything for the Oxford Museum, to which some of his friends contributed statues—Woolner being the sculptor of Lord Bacon, Munro of Galileo, and John Tupper of Linnæus, a work of observably faithful naturalism. Rossetti however soon undertook some work for another Oxford structure with which Mr. Woodward was concerned, the Union Debating-rooms. The proposal was Rossetti's own. He had accompanied Mr. Woodward to the building at the outset of the Long Vacation of 1857, and he thought the bays of the Debating-room would be suitable for wall-paintings, and suggested that they should be covered with tempera-pictures from the Romance of King Arthur. This was not a specially appropriate theme, but Rossetti had not at that time any very clear notion of the purpose which the room was to serve. Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* is a book to which, so far as memory serves me, he had not paid any marked attention in earlier years. Perhaps Mr. Morris, rather than his self-directed readings, had impressed its interest upon him, and Morris, at the same time as Rossetti, offered to paint something in the Union Room. At any rate my brother was now in a vigorously Arthurian mood, which lasted some years, and never left him entirely.

Mr. (Lord) Bowen was then the President of the Union, and took an active part in bringing the project to bear. Rossetti gave his work gratis, lasting for several months,

beginning in that Long Vacation, and so did the other artists who co-operated with him; but all costs, including travelling expenses and the living of the artists (or of those who were not Oxford residents), were borne by the Society; and I have understood that—as the young men made themselves much at their ease—these charges finally amounted to a heavy sum, more very possibly than would have been demanded and paid as mere commissions for painting.

Rossetti's work in the Union Building was done after he had contributed something to a monthly publication, *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, in which Morris was a leading writer. This serial, under the editorship of the Rev. William Fulford, was started in January 1856, and lasted a year. Towards the summer of 1856 Rossetti published here *The Burden of Nineveh*, and *The Staff and Scrip*; he also re-printed *The Blessed Damozel*, slightly altered from the form which it bore in *The Germ*. Most readers may agree with me in thinking that all these three poems are among the very best that Rossetti ever produced. *The Burden of Nineveh* was begun, and probably completed, in the autumn of 1850; *The Staff and Scrip* may date in 1852. The *Nineveh* struck Ruskin most forcibly, and he wrote the following letter:—

“DEAR ROSSETTI,—

“I am wild to know who is the author of *The Burden of Nineveh*, in No. 8 of *Oxford and Cambridge*. It is glorious. — Please find out for me, and see if I can get acquainted with him.”

The uncertainty here expressed appears, from the concluding phrase, to be genuine, but it was hardly needful. Rossetti must of course have written back that *he* was the author; and I fancy that a very large “Bravo!” which forms the commencement of another letter from Mr. Ruskin may be the response to this avowal. The word is shaped out of a series of notes of admiration.

For the painting-work at the Union Rossetti associated several young painters with himself besides Morris—Burne-

Jones, Arthur Hughes, Valentine Prinsep (whom he got to know about this time, visiting at the pleasant and fashionable residence of his parents, Little Holland House), Spencer Stanhope, and J. Hungerford Pollen. He asked Bell Scott to join, but this did not take effect. Munro carved in stone, from a design by Rossetti, the bas-relief of the tympanum, *King Arthur and the Round Table*. Rossetti undertook a large subject, *Sir Launcelot before the Shrine of the Sangrael*; and, at a later date, a second, *Sir Galahad receiving the Sangrael*. Some good work was done in the room, and some other work which, without being exactly good, was at least interesting and noticeable; but the whole affair ended in material failure. Not one of these artists knew much—hardly one of them anything—about wall-painting. They worked with reckless self-confidence, and one might almost say upon a mere system of “happy-go-lucky.” The walls were new, and not properly prepared—not even flattened. The tempera-process adopted was little more than water-colour painting, and of course the pictures flaked off—becoming a phantom, and then a wreck. After a while things did not go entirely smooth with the Union Committee. Most of the pictures—including the two by Rossetti—were not brought to completion. In 1869 Mr. Thursfield renewed negotiations. They were entertained with some good-will, but came to nothing. Before this, a local painter had been called in, and tried his hand. That also proved to be in vain; and for many years past the painted surface of the Union walls has been a confused hybrid between a smudge and a blank.

There is a letter from my brother to Madox Brown, which forecasts one of the morals of this enterprise. He says that he is doing the work in a more painstaking method than he had anticipated. “It is very jolly work in itself, but really one is mad to do such things.”

If I am not mistaken, it was while Rossetti was painting in the Union room that an under-graduate, looking equally youthful and brilliant, came forward, and was introduced to

the painter, or possibly introduced himself. This was Algernon Charles Swinburne. So my brother's sojourn in Oxford had at least one good result—that of bringing him into personal contact, and soon into very intimate friendship, with the greatest figure in our poetical literature since the advent of Tennyson and of Browning. Mr. Swinburne dedicated to him his first volume, *The Queen Mother, and Rosamund*; Mr. Morris the like with *The Defence of Guenevere, and other Poems*. In fact Rossetti was now in the position of what the French term a *Chef d'Ecole*. He had not only borne a leading part in founding and guiding the Præraphaelite movement, but he had formed a totally different group of believing admirers in the very diverse centre of Oxford University. It has been stated that Rossetti called Mr. Morris "the greatest literary identity of our time," and Mr. Swinburne "highest in inexhaustible splendour of execution." I do not know where these expressions occur; but can believe that they intimate exactly, or pretty nearly, what he felt on the subject.

Another incident of importance took place in Oxford. I give some details which I find in Mr. Scott's book, and I regard them as correct. The Union artists, or some of them, went to the Oxford Theatre one evening, and saw, in the front box above them, a very youthful lady whose aspect fascinated them all. My brother was the first to observe her. Her face was at once tragic, mystic, passionate, calm, beautiful, and gracious—a face for a sculptor, and a face for a painter—a face solitary in England, and not at all like that of an Englishwoman, but rather of an Ionian Greek. It was not a face for that large class of English people who only take to the "pretty," and not to the beautiful or superb. Her complexion was dark and pale, her eyes a deep penetrating grey, her massive wealth of hair gorgeously rippled, and tending to black, yet not without some deep-sunken glow. Soon she was traced to be Miss Burden, daughter of a business-man in the University-city. My brother obtained the privilege of painting from her, and several of his paintings

and designs in Oxford bear trace of her countenance. In later years hers was the ideal face which speaks to you out of very many of his principal works. Others among the Oxford band of painters secured the like privilege; and soon Miss Burden became Mrs. William Morris. If Rossetti had done nothing else in painting (and some people seem to suppose, most erroneously, that he *did* little else) except the ideal, and also very real, transcription of this unique type of female beauty, he might still, on that ground alone, survive in the chronicles of the art.

In 1857 a semi-public exhibition, which came to be termed "the Præraphaelite Exhibition," was got up at No. 4 Russell Place, Fitzroy Square (now embodied in Charlotte Street). My brother contributed to it the water-colours of *Dante's Dream*, *Dante drawing an Angel in Memory of Beatrice*, *Mary Nazarene* (which is I suppose the *Annunciation* water-colour previously mentioned), and *The Blue Closet*; along with *Hesterna Rosa*, and *The Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee*—being presumably the pen-and-ink designs—and photographs of the Tennyson designs, taken before the engraving process. This small display, by himself and his colleagues, excited a considerable amount of attention, more among those critics and visitors who were well-disposed towards the school than among those who were hostile. It served to confirm the impression that something was still going on in the country very different from what could be seen in the ordinary picture-shows. Other contributors were Messrs. Millais, Hunt, Brown, Hughes, Inchbold, Collins, Brett, William Davis, and Windus, with the late Thomas Seddon.

Miss Siddal's health continued a subject of great anxiety in these years, and she repaired to one or another health-resort from time to time—Dante Rossetti joining her there. In one instance they were in Bath (I think towards the end of 1856); in a second instance, 1857-8, at Matlock, where they made a stay of several months, getting on towards a year. In February 1857 there was a scheme of a sort of

joint establishment, or "College," for various artists. Burne-Jones and Morris entered into the project, and at least one other painter was proposed, besides Rossetti, who was under the impression that, before the plan could take actual effect, he and Lizzie would be married. He found however, on speaking to her, that she was decidedly indisposed to enter into any plan which would domicile her in the same place with the third painter here referred to; and Rossetti himself, writing to Madox Brown, said—"I do not think he has lately acted as a friend towards me in her regard." These are circumstances which I need not speak of further, and indeed they are not clearly within my knowledge or recollection. The project never came to anything; nor was it perchance, in itself, a very feasible one.

Those readers who have perused Mr. Bell Scott's book with diligence will have observed in it a letter from Mr. Holman Hunt written within a few days after the close of my brother's life. It contains the following passage:—

"Rossetti's death is ever in my mind. . . . I had long ago forgiven him, and forgotten the offence, which in fact, taken altogether, worked me good rather than harm. Indeed, I had intended in recent times to call upon him. . . . Our talk over the past is deferred until our meeting in the Elysian Fields, when . . . we may talk over back history as having nothing in it not atoned for and wiped out long ago, and as having value only as experience which has done its work in making us both wiser and better."

I understand perfectly well what it is that Mr. Hunt terms "the offence," but will not dwell upon any details; only remarking that, if my reader chooses to ask the old question "Who was the woman?" he will not be far wrong, though his query may chance to remain for ever unanswered. She was not any person whose name occurs in these pages. The incident belongs to the year 1857. It behoves me to add that Mr. Hunt was wholly blameless in this matter; not so my brother, who was properly, though I will not say very deeply, censurable. This transaction left no trace in his after career.

## XXI.

## WORK IN 1858-59.

THE tale of work in these years is not very extensive ; but naturally some things were going on which have been previously mentioned—more especially the Triptych for Llandaff Cathedral. There were—the pen-and-ink design of *Hamlet and Ophelia* ; the water-colour *Mary in the House of John* ; *Salutatio Beatricis*, representing Dante meeting Beatrice in Florence, and in the Garden of Eden, painted in oil in a week on a door in Mr. Morris's residence, The Red House, Upton, near Bexley Heath, Woolwich ; a water-colour, *A Christmas Carol*, in which a lady is shown chaunting as her hair is combed out ; and a small oil-picture, *Bocca Baciata*. Some other examples can be here passed over ; though I might specify the very beautiful head, Indian ink, of Mrs. Morris, before her marriage, entitled *Queen Guenevere*, and now in the Dublin National Gallery.

"*Bocca Baciata*" is a phrase occurring in Boccaccio, meaning "kissed mouth," or "a mouth that has been kissed." This picture, a very complete and elegant specimen of the skill which Rossetti had by this time, the autumn of 1859, attained in the painting-art, is a bust fancy-portrait of a woman, with a number of marigolds. The sitter was the one whom Mr. Bell Scott describes in the following terms :—

"The paradoxical conclusion that women and flowers were the only objects worth painting was brought about by the appearance of other ladies besides Miss Siddal coming within his [Rossetti's] orbit. Among these the most important was one who must have had some overpowering attractions for him, although I never could see what they were. He met her in the Strand. She was cracking nuts with her teeth, and throwing the shells about. Seeing Rossetti staring at her, she threw some at him. Delighted with this brilliant *naïveté*, he forthwith accosted her, and carried her off to sit to him for her portrait."

I knew this person extremely well, and shall call her Mrs.

H——, which was the correct initial at, or soon after, the time when my brother first met her. I cannot recollect ever hearing anything about the nuts, but do not contest Mr. Scott's statement on that point. I do contest the allegation that my brother concluded that "women and flowers were the only objects worth painting," and several of his works, executed later than 1859, are there to confute it. That he often did paint beautiful women with floral adjuncts is however quite true. The gentlemen who commissioned or purchased his pictures are chiefly responsible for this result; as he, on the contrary, would in several instances have preferred to carry out as paintings some of his more important designs, including sometimes numerous figures of both sexes. If Mr. Scott "never could see" what were the attractions of Mrs. H——, his eyesight must have differed from that of many other people. She was a pre-eminently fine woman, with regular and sweet features, and a mass of the most lovely blonde hair—light-golden or "harvest yellow." *Bocca Baciata*, which is a most faithful portrait of her, might speak for itself. If Mr. Scott meant not so much to deny that Mrs. H—— was "fair to see," but rather to intimate that she had no charm of breeding, education, or intellect, he was right enough. Another lady of whom my brother saw a great deal in 1859, and for some little while after, was Mrs. Crabb, known as an actress by the name of Miss Herbert. He greatly admired her refined and stately classical face, was pleased with her company, and got her to favour him with sittings in various instances.

In the way of verse, I think *Love's Nocturn* and *The Song of the Bower* belong to 1859—two lyrics of passion, and in the former case of fancy as well, which stand at about the summit of Rossetti's lyrical performance. *The Song of the Bower* I regard as relating to Miss Siddal. Circumstances had kept him more apart from her than had been the case in earlier years, and he gave voice to his feelings in this poem. So at least I regard it.

In 1858 Rossetti and some other artists, along with a few

amateurs or outsiders (myself one of them), promoted the formation of a body called the Hogarth Club—quite a different body from the one which now bears the same name. One object was to hold exhibitions of works by members. These exhibitions, being visited by card of admission, and thus not strictly public, were convenient to such members as did not want to run counter to a rule of the Royal Academy whereby any works previously exhibited in public are excluded from the Academy shows. The first meeting of the Club was in July 1858, at No. 178 Piccadilly; later on the meetings were at No. 6 Waterloo Place, and the Club continued until April 1861. There were two or three exhibitions, to which my brother contributed. He was not much contented with these displays, being of opinion that some of the artists elected into the Club, and sending works of their own, were not partakers in the pictorial aims, nor in harmony with the style, of himself and his leading associates, such as Madox Brown and Burne-Jones. I hardly know now why the Club was dissolved, or allowed to drop. Perhaps its chief promoters found that it did not fully answer their expectations, and that the endeavour to “keep things going” cost them more trouble than it was worth.

## XXII.

### *MARRIAGE.*

My brother, as I said before, was in love with Miss Siddal as far back as 1850, and soon after that year there had been a definite engagement between them. Nevertheless we have now come up to the year 1860, and they remained as yet unmarried. There were two principal reasons for this delay. First and foremost came her deplorable ill-health, which was often such as to prevent either of them from entertaining the idea of matrimony at a time when other circumstances would have been propitious to it. She looked delicate, and to a skilled eye probably very ill, but had not in the least degree

lost her beauty, nor even her comeliness. Second, his money-position, though by no means so bad or with so little outlook as that of many another young painter, continued for some while precarious ; his receipts small, his habits, if not exactly extravagant, unthrifty to the extent of improvidence, his purse often empty, and needing to be replenished by some expedient or other apart from that of the regular day's work. A pawnbroker was a frequent resource—necessarily a very scanty one, and ultimately on the losing side. Besides all this, it may be true that, when a moment came for making the plunge, he hesitated, temporized, and lost it ; and this would be only natural for a man immersed in pictorial and partly in literary projects and doings, to whom every hour was precious and bespoken, and who moreover—such was my brother's case—was very difficult to be stirred out of his daily groove of habit and association.

By the beginning of 1860 Rossetti's position, as regards commissions and consequent income, had improved ; though it was still far from being so prosperous and secure as it became some years later. The Triptych for Llandaff was going on. The arrangement with Mr. Ruskin had probably come to an end, or was proceeding languidly and intermittently. Mr. Boyce remained an occasional purchaser, and Colonel Gillum, who first came to my brother with an introduction from Browning, and who is now well known as a zealous philanthropist, the founder and director of a "Boys' Home." Mr. Leathart of Newcastle-on-Tyne took several specimens of Rossetti's art ; and more particularly Mr. Thomas E. Plint, of Leeds, a stockbroker and prominent Nonconformist leader. He began purchasing towards the end of 1856, and seemed ready to acquire, on terms more than tolerably liberal, almost anything that the painter had to offer him. I do not remember how he first came into this particular artistic circle. He bought from several so-called Præraphaelite painters, and possibly Mr. Holman Hunt, as having exceptional hold on the religious world, may have come foremost. Rossetti, with his constant alertness for his

friends' interests, got Mr. Plint to purchase from Madox Brown, Burne-Jones, and Morris. This professional advantage however was not to continue long, for in the course of 1860 Mr. Plint died very suddenly, leaving Rossetti's affairs with his estate much embroiled, what between payments made and pictures due but not yet brought to completion.

In April 1860, and also in May, my brother was down with Lizzie at Hastings. The reader of these Family-letters will observe one addressed to me on 17 April, showing the very alarming condition of her health at that time, as well as the fact that he had then in his possession an ordinary license for marriage. A letter to Madox Brown, 22 April, is couched in still stronger terms, saying that Lizzie "has seemed ready to die daily, and more than once a day." At last however the moment arrived, and on 23 May they were married at St. Clement's Church, Hastings. It is pleasant to observe, from the note which Rossetti addressed to Brown on this very day, that he had beforehand paid his bride the little attention of getting her initials, E. E. R., stamped in cipher on the notepaper.

They went away at once on a wedding-trip by Folkestone and Boulogne to Paris—a city which had in previous instances seemed favourable to Lizzie's health. At Boulogne Rossetti saw again his good old friends the Maenzas, and his bride viewed them both, but more especially Signor Maenza, with great predilection. Her constitution rallied to some extent, and they stayed in Paris until near the close of June, my brother continuing there to do something in the way of his profession. His ideas on matters of art were now considerably different from what they had been when he visited Paris with Holman Hunt in 1849. He had shed the prejudices—a compound between the juvenile, the half-informed, the wilful, and the humoursome—of P.R.B'ism, and no longer scampered through the Louvre until he found some picture of the less fully matured period of art which hit his fancy. In 1860 he pronounced the gorgeous Paul Veronese of *The Marriage in Cana* to be "the greatest picture in the world." This again,

if free from clear perversity, was rash for a pictorial student and practitioner whose "world" of art consisted only of London, Paris, and Belgium, to the exclusion of all those masterpieces of which one knows nothing solid until one has been elsewhere—more especially in Italy. And later on, 1871, he had got to think Veronese (and also Tintoret) "simply detestable without their colour and handling"; but, as the colour and handling *are* in the *Marriage of Cana* picture, he must have retained a very vivid admiration for that.

As I have said, Rossetti did some amount of art-work in Paris. He brought into its present form the pen-and-ink design named *How they met Themselves*, and designed, if he did not partly paint, the subject of *Dr. Johnson and the Methodistical Young Ladies at the Mitre Tavern*. As he was not a little superstitious, and sensitive to ill omens, I am somewhat surprised that he took up the former of these drawings. Here the lady—studied from Lizzie, and very like her—is represented swooning away as she encounters her own wraith—not to speak of her lover or husband, who grasps his sword on seeing the wraith of himself. To meet one's wraith is ominous of death, and to figure Lizzie as meeting her wraith might well have struck her bridegroom as uncanny in a high degree. In less than two years the weird was wofully fulfilled.

From Paris the bride and bridegroom returned to the old quarters in London, 14 Chatham Place—enlarged later on by breaking through the wall of an adjoining house, and adding some apartments on the same floor. With this addition the domicile became compact, comfortable, sightly, and fully sufficient for all present wants. They also took for a while part of a house in Downshire Hill, Hampstead, where they were near the Madox Browns. This was principally or wholly with a view to Lizzie's health.

## XXIII.

*MARRIED LIFE.*

MR. BELL SCOTT has expressed the opinion that Rossetti was not well adapted for married life. He terms marriage "an even way of life the most unlikely possible to suit his late development." By the phrase "his late development" Mr. Scott means apparently that Rossetti, not having indulged in any juvenile amours or entanglements, had in the process of years become more susceptible to influences of that character. On this point I have already had my say, and have made my reader aware that Rossetti was in love with his future wife as far back as his twenty-third year, and had deferred marriage for reasons all of them intelligible, and some cogent. I do not, however, dissent from Mr. Scott's opinion that my brother, at the age of thirty-two, was less likely to settle down into the ordinary habits of married life than many other men would have been.

His poetical and artistic temperament, his devotion to the ideas and practice of an artist and poet, his now rooted bachelor-customs of working when he could or when he liked, of keeping any hours or no recognized hours, of living in chambers without a regular home-dinner, of seeing any people he chose just as they happened to come, most of them men, of eschewing the minor observances of society in the way of visiting and dressing, etc.—and in short his propensity for doing whatever he liked simply because he liked it, and without any self-accommodation to what other people might like instead—all this made it improbable that he would prove a complaisant or well-matching husband on the ordinary lines of complaisance. He was not what I should call "Bohemian"—he neither drank nor gambled nor betted nor smoked nor amused himself in any rough-and-ready manner; but certainly he did not belong to the tribe of those decorous citizens whose highest ambition seems to be that they should demean themselves the one like the other, and all in some conformity to

"the upper classes." Besides, he had long been inured to having things his own way, and to a certain ungrudgingly conceded leadership even among the men of genius who formed his inner circle. He might have modified Iago's phrase, and said, "For I am nothing if not dominant." It is to be remembered that his wife was perfectly accustomed to his habits, had much of tendency and feeling in the same direction as himself, and, from her constant and severe ill-health if from no other cause, was very little in the way of polite visiting or elegant sight-seeing.

Two families she did very frequently visit with—the Madox Browns and the Morrisises; and I suppose in a minor degree the Burne-Joneses, for Mr. Jones had married (Miss Georgina Macdonald) very soon after my brother's wedding. The Macdonalds were a rather numerous family, all or most of whom were in some degree known to my brother, and were probably not unknown to his wife. Two of the sisters are now Mrs. Poynter, wife of the Director of the National Gallery, and Mrs. Kipling, mother of Mr. Rudyard Kipling. With the Brown and Morris families Mrs. Rossetti stayed every now and then along with her husband, and at some other times without him. The Ruskins they saw occasionally, but not so regularly as might have been expected. For one reason or another I happen to have witnessed very little of my brother's married life. We lived at opposite ends of the town—he by Blackfriars Bridge, and I, with my mother and sisters, near Regent's Park (166 Albany Street), and each of us had his separate unavoidable occupations.

There is a pretty little letter from Mr. Ruskin, congratulating Dante and Lizzie on their marriage. It is dated 4 September 1860, as he had been away at a prior date. I extract the postscript :—

"I looked over all the book of sketches at Chatham Place yesterday [the book of sketches was a large handsome volume given to Rossetti by Lady Dalrymple, a most obliging friend of his, sister to Mrs. Prinsep. He inserted into its commodious leaves a great

number of pencil and other drawings, many of which remained undisposed-of up to the date of his death. Mr. Ruskin, it is to be inferred, had called in Chatham Place on some day when the Rossettis were staying at their lodgings at Hampstead]. I think Ida should be very happy to see how much more beautifully, perfectly, and tenderly, you draw when you are drawing *her* than when you draw anybody else. She cures you of all your worst faults when you only look at her."

These drawings of Lizzie, very considerable in number from first to last, were made some before and some after marriage. There is a substantial measure of truth in what Mr. Ruskin said as to their quality, pure and exquisite in a high degree, as pitted against even the finest drawings which my brother made from other sitters at any period of his pictorial career.

After allowing for the three married couples whom I have named, there was not, I think, any person whom Rossetti saw, during his wedded life, so constantly and so delightedly as Mr. Swinburne. This poet's first volume—the two dramas of *The Queen Mother* and *Rosamund*—came out in the only completed year, 1861, of my brother's marriage. It did not create any particular stir, but Rossetti knew perfectly well what to think of the volume, and of its author and his future. Mr. Swinburne's brilliant intellect, his wide knowledge of poetry and astonishing memory in quotation, his enthusiasm for whatsoever he recognized as great, his fascinating audacity and pungency in talk, and the singular and ingenuous charm of his manner to any one whom he either liked or respected, made him the most welcome of comrades to Rossetti. For what this archimage of verse thought of Mrs. Rossetti I may refer back to a previous section, XVII. At this time my brother came also into habits of some intimacy with Mr. George Meredith the celebrated novelist, and with Mr. Frederick A. Sandys the painter—of whom Rossetti had heard something in 1857, when Mr. Sandys published a caricature of Millais's picture *Sir Isumbras at the Ford*, containing figures of Millais himself, along with Hunt and Rossetti, but intended chiefly as a pasquinade against Ruskin.

Another person who was often in Rossetti's apartments was Mr. James Anderson Rose, a solicitor and art-collector, who continued on easy and pleasant terms with my brother for several years, though the latter eventually (whatever the cause) preferred to lose sight of him. Yet another was Mr. Alexander Gilchrist, author of *The Life of Etty*, who was at this time engaged in writing his most praiseworthy *Life of Blake*. For Gilchrist the feeling of Rossetti, who first met him in the spring of 1861 in relation to the Blake work, was one of genuine friendliness. He liked the writer and his writings, and had a high regard for his insight as a critic of art. Few of the events occurring at any time of his life seem to have affected Rossetti as a more staggering blow than the sudden death of Gilchrist from scarlet fever,<sup>1</sup> at the age of only thirty-three, on 30 November 1861. While his short and fierce illness lasted, Rossetti wrote to Mrs. Gilchrist offering that either himself or I would keep up the invalid's current literary work ; and he made another nearly similar offer immediately after Gilchrist's death. But soon a far crueller blow was to strike him.

Let me repeat here, from *The Life of Anne Gilchrist*—herself a noble-natured woman, whom my brother knew and appreciated from 1861 until his life closed in 1882—a trait which does honour to a lady occasionally mentioned in my pages, the second Mrs. Madox Brown. It should be understood that scarlet fever was then raging in the Gilchrist household—not only Gilchrist himself, who succumbed, but also two of his children, who recovered, being dangerously attacked :—

“In the tragedies of life there seem to be among our fellow-beings always one or two with a dash of heroism in their natures. Mrs. Madox Brown offered to come and help. Anne Gilchrist, even then, remembered that Mrs. Brown possessed children—a thought which made her decline the noble offer.”

<sup>1</sup> Several letters from Rossetti, on this subject and others, are in the book *Anne Gilchrist, Edited by Herbert H. Gilchrist*. Unwin, 1887.

Married life cannot be exactly happy when one of the spouses is perpetually and grievously ill. Affectionate and tender it may be, but not happy ; indeed the very affection bars the possibility of happiness. I hardly think that at any time in her brief period of marriage was Lizzie Rossetti quite so alarmingly ill as she had been just before it commenced ; but health was irrecoverably gone, and sickness, more or less serious, was her constant portion. She was compelled—no doubt under medical advice—to take laudanum or some opiate continually, and stimulants alternated with opiates. On 2 May 1861 she was confined of a stillborn female infant—Dr. Babington, the Head Physician of the Lying-in Hospital, being called in, as well as another doctor. Immediately before this occurrence Rossetti had written, “She has too much courage to be in the least downcast herself” ; and she rallied from the confinement rapidly enough.

In the summer of 1861 another of Rossetti’s friends had passed away—Mrs. Wells, the sister of Mr. Boyce, and wife of the R.A. Portrait-painter. Her age may have been under thirty. She was herself an exhibiting painter of exceptional talent, from which my brother and many more hoped much. He took a portrait of her as she lay in death ; and Gilchrist, so soon to follow her to the grave, wrote an obituary-notice of her, highly and deservedly eulogistic.

A phrase in one of my brother’s letters to Madox Brown, 2 December 1861, may be worth observing : he professes to be “getting awfully fat and torpid.” In early youth he was slim and rather attenuated. This had now for some while ceased to be the case ; and the phrase which he used, though exaggerated, was not repugnant to fact. After this date he was sometimes (as for instance in 1873) still fatter than then, but with marked variations from time to time. In his closing years he might be considered thin again.

## XXIV.

WORK IN 1860-61—"THE EARLY ITALIAN POETS"—THE  
 . MORRIS FIRM.

AT no period of his life was my brother more busily employed than during his brief term of marriage, May 1860 to February 1862. He was much engaged in painting, in a literary project, and in a general scheme of art-work.

The death in 1860 of the then principal purchaser of his paintings, Mr. Plint, has been previously mentioned. This, at the very outset of married life, was a most serious misfortune and embarrassment to him—and a sorrow as well, for he entertained a cordial liking for this liberal and estimable man. Mr. Plint had paid him in advance no less a sum than £714, for three pictures not yet completed, perhaps hardly begun; and Rossetti had to execute and send in the works without so far neglecting other employment as to wrong surviving buyers, or to deprive himself and his wife of the means of subsistence from month to month. The details appear to some extent in his Family-letters. Some pictures probably were completed without any great delay, and my brother repaid also a part of the purchase-money. In 1865 the whole of Mr. Plint's collection of art was sold off. It included five works by Rossetti: the small oil-picture named *Burd Alane*, and the water-colours of *The Lovers* (called also *Carlisle Tower*), *The Bower-garden*, *The Wedding of St. George*, and *Dr. Johnson with the Methodistical Young Ladies at the Mitre Tavern*. Another small oil-picture of his had belonged to Mr. Plint—*The Queen of Hearts* (or *Regina Cordium*), being a portrait of Lizzie Rossetti; but this, as the sale was determined upon very soon after Lizzie's death, was, out of consideration for the painter's feelings, withdrawn from the auction under some arrangement. There were also paintings by Turner, Etty, Burne-Jones, Madox Brown, Millais, Holman Hunt, Hughes, Wallis, Windus, Brett, Alfred Hunt, William Hunt, Lewis, Holland, Oakes, Hook, Edouard Frère, Leys, and various others. This seems a sufficiently tempting list; but for some

reason or other (possibly, but I cannot affirm it, there was a combination of picture-dealers inimical to the new school) the sale proved a very great failure—so far, at any rate, as pictures of the “Præraphaelite” order were concerned. Scarcely any even tolerable prices were realized save by Rossetti’s pictures, and for these the prices were much less than Mr. Plint had not extravagantly given. For years afterwards, or indeed for the remainder of his life, my brother mistrusted the chances of auction-sales, and did his best to shut out from them any works of his own.

Among the productions of Rossetti in these two years were—the water-colour of *Lucrezia Borgia* (preparing a poison-draught); the finished oil-sketch of the old *Magdalene* subject; the crowded pen-and-ink design of *Cassandra* (prophesying the death of Hector); *The Annunciation*, painted in oil on a pulpit in the Church of St. Martin-on-the-Hill, Scarborough; a water-colour head of Mr. Swinburne, I suppose the most vigorous and finished record of his youth which posterity will have to cherish; a red-chalk life-sized head of Ruskin; the oil-picture *Fair Rosamund*; and an oil-picture named *Dantis Amor*, of symbolical character. The same design appears in a pen-and-ink drawing. There were also the two designs for Christina Rossetti’s volume (published in 1862) *Goblin Market, and other Poems*. The *Magdalene* stands very fully described in a letter which my brother in 1865 addressed to the wife of the purchaser, Mr. Clabburn of Norwich. This is printed in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 16 January 1891. The *Cassandra* is one of the most important among all my brother’s inventions. Many a time did he wish to set-to at painting it, but something always interfered—chiefly the constant run of commissions for pictures of a less exacting and less costly kind. It was certainly one of his lifelong regrets that this subject remained only a design, and not a picture.

The time had now come for Rossetti to appear before the public as author of a volume—*The Early Italian Poets*. I have already spoken at some length about this very interesting series of translations, the work almost entirely of his

eighteenth to his twenty-second year; and I will avow my belief that there was not in the United Kingdom another man who could have done them half as well—with half the insight into the poetic motives and character of the originals, or half the personal power of poetic transfusion, which he brought to the task. Self-reliant though he was when he made the translations, and still more so when he was preparing to publish them, and, by his innermost nature, immutably biassed in certain directions and not in others, he was nevertheless extremely ready to consult well-qualified friends as to this book, and to take some practical advantage of the advice which they might offer him. In this way he showed his MS. to Mr. Allingham, Mr. Ruskin, Mr. Patmore, Count Aurelio Saffi (then in Oxford, once the noble Triumvir of Rome along with Mazzini and Armellini), and no doubt to Mr. Swinburne and some others as well. To myself he committed the MS. of the *Vita Nuova*, asking me to introduce any change of diction, etc., which I might judge expedient.

Ruskin liked the translations, but urged that crudities (and there must have been many in MSS. going back to that remote period of youth) should be removed. Patmore wrote a letter of so much generous *élan*, and so stringently expressed, that I will not scruple to re-produce it here:—

“21 May 1861.

“MY DEAR ROSSETTI,

“A thousand thanks for what I see at a glance is one of the very few really precious books in the English or any other language. It seems to me to be the first time that a translator has proved himself, by his translations alone, to be a *great* poet. Your book is so exquisitely to my taste that I almost dread to read it—as one dreads other great enjoyments which will diminish with enjoyment. How I envy the iron muscle and the electric nerve which appears everywhere in your poetic diction! It would be absurd to *wish* you success after such intrinsic success as the book itself is.

“Yours ever,

“COVENTRY PATMORE.

“I am rejoiced to hear of your wife's health.”

Mr. Ruskin's good-will to *The Early Italian Poets* was not confined to words. After another publisher had been consulted without definite upshot, the MS. was offered to Ruskin's publishers Messrs. Smith and Elder, and they agreed to undertake the risk, subject (it would seem) to an advance or guarantee of £100 by Ruskin. The book came out in 1861, and was extremely well received. I might even say it was received with general acclaim, so far as a work of poetical translation ever *can* be welcomed and applauded in England. By 1869 about 600 copies of it had sold; and the profits covered the £100 of Mr. Ruskin, and a minute dole of less than £9 to Rossetti. A few copies, 64, still remained on hand. It has been stated that Mr. Ruskin subsidized Rossetti in bringing out not only *The Early Italian Poets*, but also the volume of original *Poems*, 1870. But this is quite erroneous.

My brother had intended to produce some etchings to illustrate the volume. He made a graceful design of two lovers kissing,<sup>1</sup> which was engraved, and formed the foundation of his water-colour entitled *The Rose-garden*. Even as late as 18 June 1861 he thought of doing the etchings, and giving them in gratis if the publishers would not compensate him. At last this project was abandoned, and the book appeared without any designs.

At some time—it may have been before 1861—Rossetti showed a number of his original poems to Ruskin, with a direct view to the publication of some of them in the *Cornhill Magazine*, issued by Messrs. Smith and Elder, and then edited by Thackeray (the latter must have been known to my brother by sight, but I question whether they ever interchanged a word). Ruskin admired the poems to a large extent, but raised objections to one and another, and no magazine-publishing ensued. Rossetti however was still bent

<sup>1</sup> To my surprise, I lately saw, in an American journal, this design, modernized in costume, adopted to bedeck the advertisement of some tradesman for his "washing-powder"—a queer phase of metempsychosis.

upon bringing the poems out ; and the volume of *The Early Italian Poets* contained an intimation that *Dante at Verona, and other Poems*, would shortly be printed. This also, as will soon be seen, came to nothing.

It was, I believe, in 1860 that an enterprise which has proved to be of no less than national importance was set on foot. I mean the foundation of the Decorative Firm which, known at first as "Morris, Marshall, Falkner, and Co.," is now named "Morris and Company." One may note it as rather curious that this Firm consisted of the same number of men, seven, as the Præraphaelite Brotherhood. The Brotherhood introduced into painting something that might well be called a revolution, and the Firm introduced into decoration something still more revolutionary for widespread and as yet permanent effect. Rossetti was prominent in both adventures.

The seven members of the Firm—I will name them in what appears to me to be the approximate order of their importance in bringing this scheme into working-order—were William Morris, Madox Brown, Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Philip Webb, Peter Paul Marshall, and Charles Falkner. Mr. Webb is an architect of much originality of view, and practical attainment and skill. He built, among other things, the Red House at Upton tenanted by Mr. Morris. He has also marked ability in designing for stained glass and other forms of decoration, especially in the way of animal life. Mr. Marshall was the first originator of the idea of such a Firm. He is an engineer (now for many years settled in Norwich), son-in-law to Mr. John Miller, the merchant and picture-collector in Liverpool, and is besides a capable painter who might, under differing circumstances, have passed out of the amateur into the professional stage of work. I believe Rossetti was the first person to whom he broached his idea ; he eagerly caught at it, and imparted it to others. Mr. Falkner, an Oxford Mathematician and close friend of Mr. Morris, took no part in the practical work of the Firm, but gave it his willing support ; and I suppose that he, like each of the others, put a modicum of money into it. What this

modicum was—in my brother's or in any case—I do not know. As to Rossetti, at any rate, I presume it to have been decidedly small. Mr. Morris was on a different footing in this respect. He ventured something very substantial, and, but for him, it may be safely said that the Firm would not have been constituted at all. They set up in the secluded but decorous quarters of Queen Square, Bloomsbury; or I think, first of all, in Red Lion Square.

They were all young men—the senior, Madox Brown, being aged thirty-nine in 1860; and there was a deal of jollity among them. Indeed there was always jollity where Rossetti was present—not to speak of Morris and Brown, who were the heartiest of the hearty, or of any of the other members; for nothing is more contrary to fact, or more absurd to the reminiscence of those who knew him in the old days, than the current notion that Rossetti was a vague and gloomy phantasiist, combined of mysticism and self-opinion, who was always sunk in despondency, or fizzing with affectation, or airing some intangible ideal. I must apologize to his loved memory for even alluding to such a trumpery misconception. Winged was the jest and loud and contagious the laugh from his full lips. Had there been no one else to keep his colleagues in heart and humour, his own resources would have sufficed. To some of these highly distinguished colleagues it would be unjust to say that Rossetti was *primus inter pares*; but certainly he was *nulli secundus*. Nature had endowed him in ample measure with one of her most precious secrets—that of dominance, leadership, and comradeship, each in its proper place. No more downright and no more unpretentious man existed within the four seas. How long his vigorous temperament continued to scintillate into high spirits we shall see as we proceed. There were flashes of it till the last.

The more one reflects upon it, the more surprising it seems that three youths, almost boys, started, in great lightness of heart and disregard of externals, if also with a most resolute purpose at the core, so serious a movement as that of

Præraphaelitism; and that, with some assistance from the same quarter, other youths—I mean more especially Morris and Jones—founded, in very much the same temper of mind, so vast a recasting and reform of decorative art as is identified with the name and the fortunes of “Morris, Marshall, Falkner, and Co.” Clearly, without reality of genius, of insight, and of labour, neither of these enterprises would have made the least headway. A puff of wind, a treacherous sand-bank, a sunken reef, or a rock-bound coast—and more than enough of all these were at hand—would have made short work of the whole craft.

Light or boisterous chaff among themselves, and something very like dictatorial irony towards customers, were the methods by which this singular commercial firm was conducted, and was turned, after a longish period of uncertain probation, into a flourishing success. There was no compromise. Mr. Morris, as the managing partner, laid down the law, and all his clients had to bend or break. Frequent meetings—of the least business-like aspect of business, and yet thoroughly efficient, as the event proved—were held; and the only designation for the undertaking which passed current with the partners or their intimates was “the Shop.” From the first the Firm turned out whatever any one wanted in the way of decorative material—architectural adjuncts, furniture, tapestries, embroideries, stained glass, wall-papers, and what not. The goods were first-rate, the art and the workmanship excellent, the prices high. No concession was made to individual tastes or want of taste, no question of abatement was entertained. You could have the things such as the Firm chose that they should be, or you could do without them.

A detailed history of the Firm of Morris, Marshall, Falkner, and Co., or Morris and Company, would by this time be an interesting thing; but it is not my affair to write one, nor indeed have I any means of doing so, even if the inclination served. I must limit myself to a few particulars regarding my brother’s work in this connexion. As I have before implied, he was not the leading spirit in the Firm.

Mr. Morris came much the foremost, not only by being constantly on the spot, to work, direct, and transact, but also by his abnormal and varied aptitude at all kinds of practical processes. Mr. Madox Brown had always taken a more than common interest in decorative art as applied to household-requirements; and his activity, as well as that of Mr. Burne-Jones, in designing for stained glass and other such matters, far exceeded any that Rossetti was called upon to display. Mr. Webb must likewise have done a solid amount of work. Towards the beginning of 1865 an acquaintance of my brother, Mr. Warrington Taylor, was brought into the business as a manager and accountant. He did excellent service in keeping things straight and safe; but this only lasted a few years, as he died young of consumption. He had very good perceptions in various matters of art, especially music.

My brother was entitled to a certain proportional share in the profits of the partnership, and besides he was paid at a regulated rate for such designs as he produced. With few exceptions, these were for stained glass. For St. Martin's, Scarborough, he designed two lights—*Adam and Eve in Paradise*. There were also seven glass-cartoons of *The Parable of the Vineyard* (very able compositions, with plenty of dramatic character); six of *St. George and the Dragon*; and *The Last Judgment*, nine subjects within a circle. At a later date, 1869, he drew *The Sermon on the Plain*, for a window in Christ Church, Albany Street, in memory of our Aunt Margaret Polidori. These are the only designs for the Morris firm (besides the pulpit-painting, previously specified, of *The Annunciation*) which appear to be known to me. There may perhaps be others in a set of glass-cartoons now in the possession of Mr. Theodore Watts.

## XXV.

## DEATH OF MRS. DANTE ROSSETTI.

ROSSETTI'S married life lasted from 23 May 1860 to 11 February 1862. The essence of his wife's illness was, I

apprehend, phthisis, with the accompaniment of a great deal of acute and wearing neuralgia. It was for the neuralgia that she had been medically authorized or directed to take frequent doses of laudanum. The phthisis had not as yet brought on any noticeable degree of emaciation; but it was running its course, and he would have been a sanguine person who, at the beginning of 1862, could anticipate for her more than some five or six years of life at the utmost. Though she was often kept within-doors by illness, her habits were not those of a recluse, and she frequently accompanied her husband to dinner at some public dining-room or other. She had very little of a housewifely turn. She often sat to him—and did this, only a few days before her last, for the figure of the Princess Sabra in the water-colour which is called either *St. George and the Princess Sabra*, or *St. George and the Dragon*. She is shown holding the knight's helmet, filled with water to lave the bloodstains of his recent conflict. This was the latest occasion on which Lizzie sat for any head.

On 10 February 1862 Rossetti and his wife, with Mr. Swinburne, dined at the Sablonière Hotel in Leicester Square. She was not less well than usual, and joined in the talk with animation. She returned with her husband to their home in Chatham Place. He went out again, and was back late. I will quote here the few words which I jotted down on the following day, as a memento for my own use. It is of the scantiest, but must serve for our present purpose :—

“February 11. Death of poor Lizzie, Gabriel's wife. Coming home last night past 11 from the Working Men's College, he found her almost gone from the effects of laudanum; and, spite of the efforts of four doctors, she died towards 7½ this morning. [One of the doctors was Mr. John Marshall, at that time a Surgeon, finally M.D. He became Professor of Anatomy to the Royal Academy, and President of the Royal College of Surgeons. He was intimate with Madox Brown, and hence with Rossetti, who very frequently consulted him on his own account in after years.] I was called from Somerset House about 12½ [by Mrs. Birrell, the housekeeper of the Chambers 14 Chatham Place, who had

been there during the entire duration of my brother's stay]. Brown, whom Gabriel had called on before 5 in the morning, was there [his residence was then near Highgate Rise], and told me the circumstances. Lizzie and Gabriel had dined at a Hotel with Swinburne that afternoon. The poor thing looks wonderfully calm now and beautiful.

“‘Ed avea in sè umiltà sì verace  
Che pareva che dicesse, Io sono in pace.’”

I could not but think of that all the time I looked at her, it is so exactly like.”

The only further particulars I find in any book regarding Mrs. Rossetti's death are given by Mr. Bell Scott, who must apparently have heard them from the widower. He simply says that Rossetti, after taking her back to Chatham Place, “advised her to go to bed”; and “on his next and final home-coming he had to grope about for a light, and called to her without receiving a reply.”

Of course there was an inquest, of which I shall proceed to give the only newspaper account which I possess. It may come from the *Daily News*, but I am not sure. I do not think that any other newspaper account, in the least degree detailed, appeared—a fact which sufficiently shows that to the great bulk of the British public the name of Dante Gabriel Rossetti continued practically unknown at the beginning of 1862. I was present at the inquest, but omitted to keep any record of it. My brother braced himself manfully to

<sup>1</sup> This couplet comes from Dante's *Vita Nuova*, the poem which relates his prevision of the death of Beatrice. In my brother's translation it is rendered thus:—

“And with her was such very humbleness  
That she appeared to say, I am at peace.”

This subject had been already painted by Rossetti as a water-colour, and it forms the theme of his largest oil-picture, *Dante's Dream*, now in the Walker Art-gallery of Liverpool. In neither of these works was his wife represented as Beatrice. Mrs. Hannay sat in the first instance, and Mrs. Morris in the second.

the painful effort of giving evidence ; and his deposition was followed (though not so shown in the newspaper) by those of Mr. Swinburne, and of Mrs. Birrell who testified to uniformly affectionate relations between the husband and wife.

The following is the newspaper-paragraph :—

“DEATH OF A LADY FROM AN OVERDOSE OF LAUDANUM.—On Thursday Mr. Payne held an inquest at Bridewell Hospital on the body of Eliza Eleanor Rosetti, aged twenty-nine, wife of Dante Gabriel Rosetti, Artist, of No. 14 Chatham Place, Blackfriars, who came to her death under very melancholy circumstances. Mr. Rosetti stated that on Monday afternoon, between six and seven o'clock, he and his wife went out in the carriage for the purpose of dining with a friend at the Sablonière Hotel, Leicester Square [the term ‘the carriage’ seems to suggest that my brother kept a carriage of his own, which was most assuredly not the fact]. When they had got about halfway there his wife appeared to be very drowsy, and he wished her to return. She objected to their doing so, and they proceeded to the Hotel, and dined there. They returned home at eight o'clock, when she appeared somewhat excited. He left home again at nine o'clock, his wife being then about to go to bed. On his return at half-past eleven o'clock he found his wife in bed, snoring loudly and utterly unconscious. She was in the habit of taking laudanum, and he had known her take as much as 100 drops at a time, and he thought she had been taking it before they went out. He found a phial on a table at the bedside, which had contained laudanum, but it was then empty. A doctor was sent for, and promptly attended. She had expressed no wish to die, but quite the reverse. Indeed she contemplated going out of town in a day or two, and had ordered a new mantle which she intended wearing on the occasion. He believed she took the laudanum to soothe her nerves. She could not sleep or take food unless she used it.—Mr. Hutchinson, of Bridge Street, Blackfriars, said he had attended the deceased in her confinement in April with a stillborn child. He saw her on Monday night at half-past eleven o'clock, and found her in a comatose state. He tried to rouse her, but could not, and then tried the stomach-pump without avail. He injected several quarts of water into the stomach, and washed it out, when the smell of laudanum was very distinct. He and three other

medical gentlemen stayed with her all night, and she died at twenty minutes past seven o'clock on Tuesday morning.—The jury returned a verdict of Accidental Death."

Our mother and sisters and myself were constantly with Dante during those harrowing days which intervene between a death and a funeral. His anguish was keen, but his mind clear. He was not prostrated in that kind of way which makes a man incapable of self-regulation. Brown was often there, and the sister of Lizzie playfully nicknamed "the Roman." I recollect a moment of great agitation, when my brother, standing by the corpse, was crying out, "Oh Lizzie, Lizzie, come back to me!" With a woman's kindly tact the sister felt that this was an instant when emotion should be seconded, and not controlled; and she reminded him of some old touches of sportive and now pathetic affection, to give the freer flow to his tears. Mr. Ruskin called one day, and saw the rest of us, but not Dante. He spoke with his usual tenderness of feeling, and I then for the first time became aware of the great change which had taken place in his views on religion. On the second or third day after death Lizzie looked still lovelier than before, and Dante almost refused to believe that she was really dead—it might be a mere trance consequent upon the laudanum. He insisted that Mr. Marshall should be called in to decide—with what result I need not say.

The day of the funeral came. On this also I have a very brief note:—

"February 17. The funeral. Grave 5779, Highgate [the same grave in which my father lay buried—my mother is now there too, and, even since I wrote this very sentence, my dear sister Christina]. Gabriel put the book of his MS. poems into the coffin."

I remember this incident. There were some friends assembled in one of the rooms in Chatham Place; the coffin, not yet close-shut, was in another. My brother, unwitnessed, deposited the MS. in the coffin. He then joined his friends,

and informed Madox Brown of what he had done, saying—"I have often been writing at those poems when Lizzie was ill and suffering, and I might have been attending to her, and now they shall go." Brown disapproved of such a sacrifice to a mere impulse of grief or of self-reproach, and he appealed to me to remonstrate. I replied—"Well, the feeling does him honour, and let him do as he likes." The sacrifice was no doubt a grave one. Rossetti thus not only renounced any early or definite hopes of poetic fame, which had always been a ruling passion with him, but he also abandoned a project already distinctly formulated and notified; for, as we have seen, a forthcoming volume of his original poems was advertised in *The Early Italian Poets*.

Mr. Caine relates this matter somewhat differently. I do not know from whom he obtained his details; where they may be considered incompatible with my reminiscence, I abide by my own. He says:—

"The poems he had written, so far as they were poems of love, were chiefly inspired by and addressed to her. At her request he had copied them into a little book presented to him for the purpose; and on the day of the funeral he walked into the room where the body lay, and, unmindful of the presence of friends, he spoke to his dead wife as though she heard, saying, as he held the book, that the words it contained were written to her and for her, and she must take them with her, for they could not remain when she had gone. Then he put the volume into the coffin between her cheek and beautiful hair, and it was that day buried with her in Highgate Cemetery."

Probably very few letters from Rossetti are extant written immediately after and relating to his wife's death. With his closest friends he was in personal communication, and to others he would be by no means expansive on such a topic. There is, however, one letter in print, addressed to Mrs. Gilchrist, and I think it as well to reproduce it here. In the opening paragraph he refers to the fact that he had so recently had to condole with Mrs. Gilchrist on her husband's death, and now she was condoling with himself on his wife's.

"45 UPPER ALBANY STREET,<sup>1</sup> 2 March 1862.

"MY DEAR MRS. GILCHRIST,—

"I thank you sincerely in my turn for the words of sorrow and sympathy which, coming from you, seem more terribly real than any I have received. I remember clearly the mistrustful feeling of insufficiency with which I sat down to write to you so short a time ago, and know now what it is both to write and to receive even the sincerest words at such a time.

"I have now to be thankful for obligations connected with my work which were a source of anxiety before; for without them it seems to me that I could never work again. But I already begin to find the inactive moments the most unbearable, and must hope for the power, as I feel most surely the necessity, of working steadily without delay. Of my dear wife I do not dare to speak now, nor to attempt any vain conjecture whether it may ever be possible for me, or I be found worthy, to meet her again.

"I am staying at my mother's just now, and hope that some of my family, if not all, may join with me in seeking a new home together, as in any case I cannot any longer bear to remain in the old one. I have thoughts of coming if possible to Chelsea,<sup>2</sup> and have already, in the impossibility I find of remaining inactive, been seeking for fresh quarters in that and other directions. Your photograph [of Alexander Gilchrist] I still have, and hope to send you some result from it, if I find such possible [he was thinking of drawing some likeness of Gilchrist, founded partly on the photograph, but in this he did not succeed]. Whenever it may be necessary to be thinking about the *Life of Blake* I hope you will let me know, as my brother is equally anxious with myself, and perhaps at the present moment better able, to be of any service in his power.

"While writing this, I have just read your letter again, and again feel forcibly the bond of misery which exists between us, and the unhappy right we have of saying to each other what we both know to be fruitless. Pray believe that I am not the less grateful to you, at least for the heartfelt warmth with which it is said."

<sup>1</sup> This was the residence of my mother and sisters and myself. Later on it was called 165 Albany Street.

<sup>2</sup> The joint home of Mr. and Mrs. Gilchrist had been in Chelsea, close to Carlyle's house. Mrs. Gilchrist was now just about removing into the country, Shottermill near Haslemere.

## XXVI.

*SETTLING IN CHEYNE WALK.*

THE letter just cited has shown two points: that Rossetti, after his bereavement, did not feel equal to continuing to reside at Chatham Place—I hardly believe that he slept there even a single night after his wife's funeral—and that he thought, upon settling in some new house, of obtaining the companionship of some or all of the members of his family. These were our mother, our two sisters, myself, and our rather aged aunt, Margaret Polidori, now considerably invalided, and living a very secluded life in my house 166 Albany Street. My brother also particularly wanted to have Mr. Swinburne in the same house with himself, thinking, not unreasonably, that, in his own depressed state of mind, he needed some inspiriting association such as he could scarcely obtain from mere family-life, and that he could procure this better from Mr. Swinburne than from any other available person. The Chambers in Chatham Place were, after Rossetti's departure, tenanted by Mr. Boyce, who remained there until 1868, shortly preceding the final demolition of the building.

The various members of the family did in fact entertain the proposal raised by Dante; the only serious difficulty arising in relation to our sister Maria, who went out giving lessons in Italian etc., and for whom any such locality as Chelsea—then more suburban than it is now—would have been a very remote centre for such purposes. This obstacle was, however, set aside; and, my brother having pretty soon fixed upon No. 16 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, termed Tudor House, as his future home, we were all prepared to join there with him and with Mr. Swinburne. But this arrangement did not take effect. Before the time came for actually removing to Cheyne Walk my brother reached the conclusion—a sound one—that that would not be the most apposite of homes for his female relatives, who therefore remained in Albany Street; glad to

house with and look after Dante, if that had been his ultimate wish, and glad also, when the wish was relinquished, to abide where they were.

At first Dante stayed with us in the Albany Street house, and he was also at times with Madox Brown. It is stated by Mr. William Sharp that the earliest thing which he painted after his wife's death was done at Brown's residence—"a small but richly toned water-colour, known simply as *Girl at a Lattice*," portrayed from a person he saw in this position. I think, however, that a crayon head of our mother, which bears the date February 1862, may have preceded even the *Girl at a Lattice*. It remains in my possession, and used constantly to hang in my brother's little breakfast-room in Cheyne Walk. Next, pending a definite settlement as to a house, he took Chambers, by himself, on the first floor of No. 59 Lincoln's Inn Fields. The first distracting shock of his calamity being past, he found himself capable of working and acting like other men, and the Chambers proved to be quite suitable for his requirements; so much so indeed that, when he had to leave them and take up his engagement in Cheyne Walk, he almost regretted that he had assumed so serious, and for him so novel, a responsibility, with all the upset (to which he was always highly disinclined) of removal and re-settling. The die was cast, however, and nothing remained but to meet its chances as they came.

For the Cheyne Walk house a new plan had meanwhile been determined. Rossetti was to be the tenant, paying a rent (assuredly a very moderate one) of £100 a year, besides—if I remember right—a premium of £225 upon entering. As his sub-tenants for defined portions of the building there were to be three persons—Mr. Swinburne, Mr. George Meredith, and myself. Of course each of us three was to pay something to Dante; though the latter did not wish me, and in fact did not allow me, to continue any such payment after affairs had got into their regular course. We were all to dine together, if present together in the house. Mr. Swinburne was generally present, Mr. Meredith much less

constantly. I came on three fixed days of the week, but not on any others unless some particular occasion arose. Swinburne, and I think Meredith, had their respective separate sitting-rooms, in which they received their personal visitors. I had, and required, a bedroom only. Dante Rossetti was by this time familiar with Mr. Meredith, whom he had seen increasingly for some three years past, and whose talents and work he seriously, though not uncritically, admired ; familiar, yet by no means so much so as with Mr. Swinburne.

Tudor House got not slightly altered in external appearance—not perhaps in structural essentials—soon after my brother's death. When he entered it, neither Cheyne Walk nor any part of London had a Thames Embankment ; in front of the house there were all the boating bustle and longshore litter of the old days : there was also no Cadogan Bridge, and across the river no Battersea Park. Cremorne Gardens, at a moderate distance to the West, were still open as a place of demi-reputable entertainment—dancing, music, fireworks, and assignations, with all their accompaniments and sequels. The look of things was far more picturesque than now—less of decorum and of stateliness, more of noise and movement. The house itself was a fine old solid edifice, without anything peculiar or showy in external aspect. Inside it was old-fashioned, many-roomed, homelike, and comfortable, with any number of wall-cupboards, and needing nothing beyond good furniture and proper keeping-up to be a highly enjoyable residence. Furniture was supplied by my brother—even from the first, but more especially as years went on—with profuse abundance and distinguished gusto for whatsoever was good and appropriate. Before going into the house he had found out in Buckingham Street, Strand (through Mr. Allingham), a retired old gentleman named Minister, who had a deal of antiquated and capital furniture, and from him he bought largely with a free hand. As to the keeping-up of the house, Rossetti did not take the like interest and pains ; but still, for several years after his tenancy began, there was no defined ground of complaint.

Mr. Hall Caine has given several particulars about the residence and its garden, and I shall take leave to borrow some of them. He has had experience in an Architect's office, and knows what he is talking about in matters of this sort. It will be understood that he never saw the premises until 1880; and many of his details indicate a state of neglect and gloom which did not exist in 1862, and still less towards 1865 and for a few years onwards, when Rossetti had accumulated large quantities of handsome and out-of-the-way furniture, blue china, and other articles of curiosity and *virtù*. A great store of such things remained in the house in July 1882, when, consequent upon his death, they came to the hammer. But even these were but a moderate proportion of what he had introduced and used from time to time. Much had been already sold, much given away or otherwise dispersed. Mr. Caine says, and I interpolate a remark here and there:—

“It was called Tudor House when he became its tenant, from the tradition that Elizabeth Tudor had lived in it [the statement which I always heard as current was that the house had been used as a nursery for the children of Henry VIII.; but this, if true at all, can only apply to some previous house on the same site, for the existing structure must belong to the Georgian time, or at earliest to that of Queen Anne]: and it is understood to be the same that Thackeray describes in *Esmond* as the home of the old Countess of Chelsey. A large garden, which recently has been cut off for building purposes, lay at the back, . . . dotted over with lime-trees, and enclosed by a high wall [the garden, about four-fifths of an acre in extent, was partly, but not wholly, cut off towards 1881: it contained a very prolific mulberry-tree, called Queen Elizabeth's mulberry-tree]. . . . Old oak then became for a time his passion; and, in hunting it up, he rummaged the brokers' shops round London for miles, buying for trifles what would eventually (when the fashion he started grew to be general) have fetched large sums. . . . No. 16 . . . seems to be the oldest house in the Walk; and the exceptional proportions of its gate-piers, and the weight and mass of its gate and railings, suggest that probably at some period it stood

alone, and commanded as grounds a large part of the space now occupied by the adjoining residences. . . . Rossetti's house had to me the appearance of a plain Queen Anne's erection, much mutilated by the introduction of unsightly bay-windows [I cannot but think this rather hard on the bay-windows—to me, and to my brother also, always a pleasant feature of a house to live in]; the brickwork seemed to be falling into decay; . . . the angles of the steps, and the untrodden flags of the courtyard, to be here and there overgrown with moss and weeds. . . . The hall had a puzzling look of equal nobility and shabbiness. . . . Three doors led out of the hall, one on each side and one in front, and two corridors opened into it; but there was no sign of staircase, nor had it any light except such as was borrowed from the fan-light that looked into the porch [the door to the right led into the small dining-room; that to the left, into the sitting-room first used by Mr. Swinburne, and ultimately by Mr. Caine himself; the one in front, into the studio, which, for an ordinary tenant, would have been the dining-room]. . . . The changes which the building must have undergone since the period of its erection had so filled it with crooks and corners as to bewilder the most ingenious observer to account for its peculiarities. . . . The studio was a large room, probably measuring thirty feet by twenty, and structurally as puzzling as the other parts of the house. A series of columns and arches on one side suggested that the room had almost certainly been at some period the site of an important staircase with a wide well; and on the other side a broad mullioned window, reaching to the ceiling, seemed certainly to bear record of the occupant's own contribution to the peculiarities of the edifice [this window had been enlarged, but not constructed, at Rossetti's instance some while after he entered the house]. . . . [Also] a window at the side, which was heavily darkened by the thick foliage of the trees that grew in the garden beyond. . . . [Rossetti's bedroom, which was on the first floor] was entered from another and smaller room which he said that he used as a breakfast-room [many a breakfast have I eaten in it, but almost invariably without the company of my brother, who rose much later than I did]. The outer room was made fairly bright and cheerful by a glittering [coloured porcelain] chandelier (the property once, he told me, of David Garrick), and, from the rustle of trees against the window-pane, one perceived that it overlooked the garden; but the inner room was dark with heavy hangings, around the walls as well as

the bed, and thick velvet curtains before the windows. . . . An enormous black-oak chimney-piece of curious design [it was Rossetti's own design, and constructed out of decorated slabs, etc., picked up here and there by himself], having an ivory crucifix on the largest of its ledges, covered a part of one side, and reached to the ceiling. . . . When I reached the room that I was to occupy during the night [it is on a landing between the ground-floor and first-floor], I found it, like Rossetti's bedroom, heavy with hangings, and black with antique picture-panels, with a ceiling (unlike that of the other rooms in the house) out of all reach or sight; and so dark from various causes that the candle seemed only to glimmer in it. . . . I strolled through the large garden at the back of the house. . . . A beautiful avenue of lime-trees opened into a grass-plot of nearly an acre in extent [it is the grass-plot which, allowing for a small strip retained, was afterwards built over; the avenue continues to be attached to the house]. The trees were just as Nature made them, and so was the grass, which in places was lying long, dry, and withered, under the sun—weeds creeping up in damp places, and the gravel of the pathway scattered upon the verges."

A few words should still be added to Mr. Caine's expressive description of the house. On the basement there were spacious kitchen-rooms, and an oddly complicated range of vaults, which perhaps had at one time led directly off to the river-side. The two ground-floor sitting-rooms looked out to the front and the river; the studio had a second door opening on the hinder part of the corridor, and conducting, down a few steps, into the garden-avenue. Though not apparent to Mr. Caine from the front hall, there were two staircases, to the right and to the left of the entrance-door of the studio. I may here take occasion to give an emphatic denial to a statement which Mr. Val Prinsep (writing in *The Art-Journal* about the picture-collection of his father-in-law Mr. Leyland) made with regard to the studio or painting-room—that it "was a sanctum unvisited by the housemaid." It was constantly visited, and adequately attended to, by the housemaid; and a housemaid who might have neglected it in a serious degree would not have remained long on the

premises. Mr. Caine makes no mention of the chief feature of the house—the unusually long and slightly drawing-room on the first floor, running the whole length of the large frontage, and presenting from its three spacious bay-windows a most enjoyable view of the river, and of the big old trees which yield umbrage to Cheyne Walk. On the second floor were a large number of rooms used as bed-chambers, hardly less than a dozen, and some of them very pleasant and commodious. There may also, but my recollection is not clear as to this, have been two or three lofts under the roof. On the roof was a great deal of lead; and, at one time during my brother's occupancy, some thieves attempted to make free with it. Mr. Herbert Gilchrist produced a very good drawing of the studio before the sale had finished in 1882; Mr. G. T. Robinson favoured me with a water-colour of the drawing-room; and three rooms were pourtrayed by Mr. Henry Treffry Dunn (of whom more anon), and photographs were taken from his designs.

It was on 24 October 1862 that Rossetti first took possession of Tudor House. His three sub-tenants were there on the same day, or immediately afterwards. On 3 November he wrote to Madox Brown, "I have reclaimed my studio from the general wilderness, and got to work."

Some writers have supposed that Rossetti was constantly mournful and dejected after his wife's death. If it were so, I would be the first to confirm the statement, and to put forward reasons partially if not wholly justifying him for such a tribute to sentiment, and such a revolt against the irreversible will of Fate. But the fact was not so, and, as a faithful biographer, I shall not pretend that it was. He had too much energy of mind and character, too many interests in the world of thought and art, too many ideas of his own, too earnest a desire to turn these into realized work, to be perpetually dwelling upon the grievousness of the past, or moping over what once had been, and could never be again. He found himself capable of living in the ties and associations of the present, applied himself vigorously to his professional

occupations, and developed much eagerness—of which there had been few symptoms in earlier days—in the collection of works of decoration or curiosity. To live in the company of such men as Meredith and Swinburne, and of many other friends older and newer, was not the basis for a life of morbid gloom and piteous unavailing retrospect. Certainly many tender and some dreadful memories haunted him ; but it would be useless to fancy or to suggest that he was at this time, or for some years to come, a personation of settled melancholy. As we proceed, we shall see what new gusts assailed him, and in what mood he encountered them. Christina has put into print a few apt words<sup>1</sup> upon the general subject. She says :—

“ Family or friendly parties used to assemble at Tudor House, there to meet with an unfailing affectionate welcome. Gloom and eccentricity, such as have been alleged, were at any rate not the sole characteristics of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. When he chose he became the sunshine of his circle, and he frequently chose so to be. His ready wit and fun amused us ; his good-nature and kindness of heart endeared him to us.”

Though my proper date for the present is only that when Rossetti started upon his tenancy of Tudor House, I will finish here what has to be said of Mr. Meredith and Mr. Swinburne as inmates of the same dwelling. Mr. Meredith and Rossetti entertained a solid mutual regard, and got on together amicably, yet without that thorough cordiality of give-and-take which oils the hinges of daily intercourse. It would have been difficult for two men of the literary order of mind to be more decisively unlike. The reader of their works—not to speak of the student of Rossetti’s paintings—will not fail to perceive this. Rossetti was not at all a mere recluse, incapable of taking very good care of himself in the current transactions of life ; he had, on the contrary, a large

<sup>1</sup> The article, a very brief one, is named *The House of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, with a woodcut of the house. It appeared in some magazine, but I forget which. The date was some little while after my brother’s death.

share of shrewdness and of business aptitude, and a quick eye for "the main chance" in all contingencies where he chose to exercise it. He understood character, and (though often too indulgent to its shadier side) he knew how to deal with it, and had indeed a rather marked distaste for that inexperienced class of persons who waver on the edge of life without ever throwing themselves boldly into it, and gripping at the facts. But Mr. Meredith was (or I should rather say, is) incomparably more a man of the world and man of society, scrutinizing all sorts of things, and using them as his material in the commerce of life and in the field of intellect. Even in the mere matter of household-routine, he found that Rossetti's arrangements, though ample for comfort of a more or less off-hand kind, were not conformable to his standard. Thus it pretty soon became apparent that Mr. Meredith's sub-tenancy was not likely to stand much wear and tear, or to outlast the temporary convenience which had prompted it. I could not now define precisely how long it continued—perhaps up to the earlier days of 1864. It then ceased, without, I think, any disposition on either side that it should be renewed. Friendly intercourse between the two men continued for some few years, and gradually wore out without any cause or feeling of dissension. In Mr. Joseph Knight's pleasant *Life of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* I find some observations made by "a friend, himself a poet," which I unhesitatingly (let me hope not rashly) attribute to our pre-eminent novelist. I quote them here less as throwing light on the character of Rossetti—highly deserving though they are of attention in that regard—than as pointing to the sort of relation which subsisted between the two during their joint sojourn in Cheyne Walk:—

"I liked him much, though I was often irritated by his prejudices, and his strong language against this or that person or subject. He was *borné* too, somewhat, in his interests, both on canvas and in verse, and would not care for certain forms of literature and life which he admitted were worth caring for. However, his talk was always full of interest and of rare knowledge; and he himself, his

pictures, and his house, altogether, had I think an immense influence for good on us all, and on English art and work—being not insular yet not un-English, and bringing into our world new and delightful subjects, and a personal character very striking and unusual and loveable.”

Mr. Swinburne remained in Tudor House for some considerable while after Mr. Meredith had left. He composed there the stupendous drama of *Atalanta in Calydon*, and wrote or finished *Chastelard*, and much of the *Poems and Ballads* (first series), and of *William Blake, a Critical Essay*. I hardly remember whether he was still in the house when the *Poems and Ballads* were published, 1866, and (amid the leers and the yells of British respectability) immediately withdrawn. If not then resident in the house, he was continually looking in there, and (I need not say) was received with all the welcome of long-standing friendship, and of admiration for astonishing genius and attainment. Ultimately it suited both himself and Rossetti that his quarters should be fixed elsewhere. One element in the case was that the painter's professional income continued to augment from year to year, and he no longer found any advantage in getting friends to share the expense of the house.

In the summer of 1862 both Ruskin and Burne-Jones were abroad in Italy. Ruskin was out of health and out of spirits owing to vexations with his studies in Political Economy. In July he wrote to my brother from Milan:—

“I do trust that henceforward I may be more with you, as I am able now better to feel your great powers of mind, and am myself more in need of the kindness with which they are joined. I've been thinking of asking if I could rent a room in your Chelsea house.”

I cannot say what answer my brother returned to this friendly, and in some respects attractive, proposal. Clearly the house was sufficiently full as it was; and, so far as I recollect, no more was heard of Mr. Ruskin as a possible inmate.

Mr. Jones wrote to Rossetti from Venice :—

“The other day I saw a letter of Titian’s. The handwriting was, absolutely, exactly like yours, as like as a forged letter of yours could be ; the whole writing a little bit bigger, I think, but the shapes of the letters as exact as could be.”<sup>1</sup>

In a letter written by my brother soon before he left Lincoln’s Inn Fields for Cheyne Walk, 21 August, I find the first mention of a painter with whom he soon became very familiar, Mr. Whistler. For several years ensuing they were on terms which, partaking of real friendliness, were more especially of great good-fellowship. This must have continued till 1872, when there was a wide gap in Rossetti’s London associations. After that date the two saw little—and at last nothing—of one another. Through Mr. Whistler, Rossetti after a while came to know the distinguished painter from Dijon, Alphonse Legros, who later on held the office of Slade-Professor in the London University for some years. This also was an intimate connexion, but terminated earlier than that with Whistler himself. Another letter belonging to 1862 shows that my brother was then about to engage a professional assistant, Mr. W. J. Knewstub, who housed with him for a year or two, preparing duplicates of pictures, and aiding him in various ways. Mr. Knewstub’s chief tendency at this time—not of direct service to Rossetti—was as a sketcher of comic or humorous subjects, for which he had a ready gift ; later on, as a painter chiefly in water-colours, he developed marked colourist talent. He and Rossetti were always on pleasant terms together.

A painter who seeks the help of an assistant must be supposed to be in good employ. Such was already the case with Rossetti, as soon as he began to settle down after his

<sup>1</sup> If Sir E. Burne-Jones formed a correct opinion as to this letter from Titian, the handwriting of it must have differed entirely from that of another letter by the great painter which I saw in the Venetian Exhibition in London in 1895. In this last-named letter the writing is singularly precise and sharp, presenting no sort of resemblance to Rossetti’s.

wife's death. He produced a good deal, and whatever he produced, if not previously bespoken, was soon sold. It is true he still was not always in command of ready money when this was in requisition, and he continued at times to have recourse to a convenient pawnbroker, or an accommodating relative or intimate. But he was prospering, and he prospered more and more, and might soon be regarded as one of those (not too numerous) painters who make a steady and very sufficient income. What he received he liked to spend. Money never clung to his fingers, nor rested in his pocket, and he never either accumulated or invested. A letter of his, dated in June 1867, shows that even then he had no banking account, which seems surprising enough. How soon afterwards he began one I am not sure, but it was well before 1872. Had the will been there, the power of adding money to money would easily have come. It should in justice be added that, if he was indulgent to himself, he was also liberal and even generous to others.

## XXVII.

## WORK FROM 1862 TO 1868.

I HAVE lumped together here no less than seven years, when my brother's powers—though somewhat less developed than they afterwards became in the direction of abstract style—were truly at their best. The dates extend from the beginning of his widowerhood to the time when, from various causes, a rather serious decline in his health set in. I shall name the several works (and there were of course many others) under the headings of Oil-pictures, Water-colours, and Designs, each class in order of date, and shall append a few details, such as my plan admits of.

*Oil-pictures.*—*Joan of Arc* (kissing the sword of deliverance); *Helen of Troy*; *Beata Beatrix*; *Aurelia* (called also *Fazio's Mistress*, but this title was finally rejected by Rossetti as inapposite); *The Beloved*, or *The Bride* (from the *Song of*

*Solomon*); *The Boat of Love* (monochrome—from a sonnet in the *Vita Nuova*); *Lilith*; *Venus Verticordia*; *The Blue Bower*; *Il Ramoscello* (or *Bellebuona*); Portrait of his Mother; *The Loving-cup*; *Sibylla Palmifera*; *Monna Vanna* (called also *Belcolore*); *Mrs. William Morris*; *La Pia* (from Dante's *Purgatorio*).

*Water-colours*.—*Paolo and Francesca*, triptych (the best version of this subject, belonging to Mr. Leathart); *Heart of the Night* (or *Mariana in the Moated Grange*); *Monna Pomona*; *The First Madness of Ophelia*; *Socrates taught to dance by Aspasia*; *Washing Hands*; *The Return of Tibullus to Delia*; *Tristram and Yseult drinking the Love-potion*; *La Bionda del Balcone*; *Rosa Triplex*.

*Designs*.—Designs for Christina Rossetti's poem, *The Prince's Progress*; *Portrait of Christina* (head poised on hands); *Michael Scott's Wooing*; *Aspecta Medusa*; *Head of Madox Brown*; *Aurea Catena* (has sometimes been incorrectly named *La Pia*); *Orpheus and Eurydice*.

Nothing that my brother produced was, to my mind, more thoroughly satisfactory than the *Joan of Arc*—the oil-picture which was sold to Mr. Anderson Rose, and by him re-sold not many years afterwards. It is somewhat singular that this head was painted from a German (not a French) woman—named, if I remember right, Mrs. Beyer. She had one of the most classically correct and strongest profiles that one could see anywhere. Something of the same kind might be said of the English original of *Helen of Troy*—a face less heroically but not less exactly moulded. *Beata Beatrix*—a reminiscence of the painter's lost wife, pourtrayed with perfect fidelity out of the inner chambers of his soul—is now in the National Gallery, the gift of Lady Mount-Temple. It was less well repeated on commission more than once, but always reluctantly. Though I have called this a "reminiscence" of his wife, it is I believe a fact that some preparation for the picture had been made during her lifetime, perhaps as far back as 1856. *Aurelia*, a small half-figure of a lady at her toilet, is one of the most finished specimens of Rossetti's execution. *The Beloved* is

by many persons accounted his very best work. I would not call it the best in the sense of being better than any other; but, in balanced brilliancy of colour, sweetness and variety of facial type, and first salient and not the less permanent impression of manifest and triumphant beauty, it certainly yields to none. *Monna Vanna* (belonging to the same purchaser, Mr. George Rae) has also and deservedly been a great general favourite. *The Boat of Love*, now in the Birmingham Art-Gallery, was a preparation for a full-coloured picture, never executed, owing partly to fast-and-loose proceedings on the part of an intending purchaser in these same years. *The Blue Bower*, a female half-figure done with more than wonted rapidity, is perhaps the most forcible piece of colour and handling that Rossetti ever produced (or may share that praise with *La Bella Mano*), as the *Ramoscello* is in all respects one of the most delicate. The *Portrait of Mrs. Morris*, in a gown of sumptuous blue, rivals *The Blue Bower* for vigour, and far exceeds it in tone of feeling. *Lilith* and *Sibylla Palmifera* are both works of thought as well as matured skill, and stand recorded in the painter's sonnets as *Body's Beauty* and *Soul's Beauty*. *La Pia* was only begun in 1868. It was then set aside for several years, and not completed until 1881.

Among the water-colours I may specify as exceptionally successful the *Paolo and Francesca*; the *Heart of the Night*, which is the same design as in the Tennyson woodcut; and the *Tristram and Yseult*. *The Return of Tibullus to Delia* is also one of Rossetti's best considered and most energetic designs. *Washing Hands*—a lady, with her lover no longer favoured—is noticeable as being one of the very few subjects which he treated in the costume of the eighteenth century. The *Dr. Johnson* group seems to be the only other such coloured work that is known to me. Equally out of his ordinary line is *Socrates taught to dance by Aspasia*. I recall very well a sketch made of this subject, and a very sprightly one it was, but I doubt whether I ever saw the water-colour.

The design of *Michael Scott's Wooing* was frequently in

Rossetti's head, and every now and then tried by his hand in different compositions. *Aspecta Medusa* (Perseus allowing Andromeda to contemplate, reflected in a tank, the severed head of Medusa) was also designed more than once. But the courage of the proposing purchaser failed him—he thought the subject too “horrid”—and this again swelled the over-long list of paintings which my brother did *not* do.

In Section XX., speaking of Mrs. William Morris, I have referred to the equally frequent and erroneous assertion that this lady constituted Rossetti's one sole type of facial beauty. This allegation is not only absurdly incorrect, but it amounts to a depreciation of his art. It implies that he was far more monotonous than he really was, and also that he had little or no discrimination as to the type which would be the most suitable according to diversity of subject and treatment. I have elsewhere<sup>1</sup> said something on that ill-understood or ill-reported matter; and I will now, without re-producing my previous words, enter rather more at large upon the same topic. This furnishes, besides the direct object, an opportunity of saying something collectively about various persons who ought not to pass unmentioned. I shall confine myself chiefly, yet not rigidly, to oil-pictures.

Rossetti began painting in 1848; and it is of course impossible that in the early years of his practice he should ever have painted from Mrs. Morris, whom he did not see until late in 1857. We have noticed before that his sister Christina sat for Mary in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, and in *Ecce Ancilla Domini*; his wife for Beatrice in a number of instances, and for Princess Sabra—and for very many other figures as well; Mrs. Hannay for Beatrice in the water-colour of *Dante's Dream*; Mrs. Beyer for *Joan of Arc*; Mrs. H. for *Bocca Baciata*. The latter also sat for the woman in *Found, Aurelia, The Blue Bower*, and *The Loving Cup*, and in the first instance for *Lilith*; but another head—that of Miss Alexa Wilding, soon to be mentioned—was, after an interval of

<sup>1</sup> In the *Art-Journal* for June 1884—Article, *Notes on Rossetti and his Works*.

years, substituted in *Lilith*, and, to my thinking, very disadvantageously so.

I proceed to other sitters not as yet mentioned. For *The Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee*, and for *Helen of Troy*, an Englishwoman sat, remarkable for beauty, but not for depth of expression. Her head appears also in the water-colour, just mentioned, of *Dante's Dream*. In *The Beloved* the chief head is from a young woman who was in much request at that time among various artists. She had a Scotch name, I think Mackenzie. This is one of the very few instances in which my brother painted an important head from a professional model, and, as an exceptional case, the experiment was conspicuously successful. The dark woman to the spectator's right is a pure-blooded gipsy, named Keomi, who became known to my brother through Mr. Sandys. To the left is a pretty face, of an *espiègle* rather than an exalted order—Ellen Smith, whom Rossetti pourtrayed several times, beginning not long after he first knew Mr. Boyce. With *Sibylla Palmifera* we come to Miss Alexa Wilding, a damsel of respectable parentage whom he saw casually in the street, in April 1865, and whom he at once determined to paint from, were it at all possible—which it proved to be. Having thus found a head of fine and rather peculiar mould, eminently strong in contour and also capable of much varying expression, which he regarded as almost a *sine quâ non*, Rossetti resolved to secure Miss Wilding to his own canvases, and with this object he paid her a regular annual salary, which went on for a long time. He was more than commonly indisposed, and many artists are to some extent the same, to share his discovery with any others, even of his intimates. Her face re-appears in *Regina Cordium* (of which I have seen an unsuccessful woodcut—the same title was bestowed upon two or three other pictures from different sitters), in *Monna Vanna*, *Rosa Triplex*, the oil-painting of *Dante's Dream* (the lady at the foot of the bed), *Veronica Veronese*, *The Blessed Damozel*, *La Ghirlandata*, *The Roman Widow*, *La Bella Mano*, and *The Sea-spell*. The last six of

these works were executed at a date beyond the latest, 1868, which is properly covered by my present section ; but, for our immediate purpose, that cannot be helped. It will be observed that Rossetti did not see Miss Wilding until several years after he had known Mrs. Morris ; and this large number of paintings from the former—not to speak of a number of minor productions with or without colour—is of itself enough to show that he was far from confining his pictorial study to the wife of the poet of *The Earthly Paradise*. *Venus Verticordia* was painted from yet another person—a remarkably handsome cook whom he met in the street ; *Monna Pomona* from a Scotch girl, Jessie—a damsel of no rigid virtue who had a most energetic as well as beautiful profile, not without some analogy to that of the great Napoleon. *Il Ramoscello* is a portrait of a daughter of one of his best purchasers and friends, Mr. William Graham, M.P. for Glasgow. Mrs. Stillman—a celebrated beauty, and the most cordial, accomplished, and amiable of ladies, herself a very elegant painter, daughter of Mr. Spartali, Consul-General for Greece—appears in the figure at the bed's head in the oil-painting of *Dante's Dream*, and in the *Vision of Fiammetta*. I seem to see also, in *The Roman Widow*, almost as much of her head as of Miss Wilding's. Mrs. Stillman had a rather younger sister, Christine (who became the Countess Edmond de Cahen). She also was a beauty, but in a way less sympathetic to Rossetti, who did not, I think, ever draw from her. The sisters became known to him through Brown, who superintended the artistic studies of the elder Miss Spartali. Mrs. Sumner, a daughter-in-law of a late Archbishop of Canterbury, was the original of the oil-painting (left unfinished) of *Domizia Scaligera*, and of some other heads produced towards 1876. The ideal women of Rossetti were, as a rule, always tall and stately persons, and with Mrs. Sumner this was especially the case. The pleasant simple picture called *Fleurs de Marie* was done from the niece of the gardener at Kelmscott Manor-house—a dwelling to be mentioned in the sequel.

I have here specified no fewer than seventeen female sitters from whom important heads were painted, some of them known before Mrs. Morris, and some afterwards. One of them, Miss Wilding, seems to have sat at least as often as Mrs. Morris for coloured, and barely less often for uncoloured, works. To read this account of the facts, and to persist afterwards in saying that Rossetti had only one model and one ideal, would be a case of wilful uncandour. In affirming this, I do not wish at all to derogate from the widespread belief that, in the extraordinarily *impressive*—the profound and abstract—type of beauty of Mrs. Morris, he found an ideal more entirely responsive than any other to his aspiration in art. It seemed a face created to fire his imagination, and to quicken his powers—a face of arcane and inexhaustible meaning. To realize its features was difficult; to transcend its suggestion, impossible. There was one fortunate circumstance—if you could but represent its *appearance*, you stood thereby already high in the region of the typical or symbolic. For idealizing there was but one process—to realize. I will not conceal my opinion that my brother succeeded where few painters would have done other than fail; he did some genuine justice to this astonishing countenance.

As we have seen, Miss Burden—before she became Mrs. Morris—obliged Rossetti by sitting for several heads while he was working in Oxford in and about 1857. In her earlier married days she sat also for the Madonna in the Llandaff Triptych, and for one or two heads of Beatrice. At the beginning of 1862 Rossetti was bereft for ever of another exquisite type of beauty—the pure loveliness and self-withdrawn suavity of his wife's face, as little matchable, in its very different way, as that of Mrs. Morris. Still an interval of years ensued; and (so far as I trace) it was only in 1868 that Mrs. Morris re-commenced to favour him with sittings. To this year appertain the oil portrait of her, and *La Pia*, and the crayon heads named *Aurea Catena* and *Reverie*. Numerous other examples followed. Some of the crayon heads or half-figures are unsurpassed amid Rossetti's work,

both as consummate likenesses, and as achievements in art ; but I will only name the oil-pictures—*Pandora*, *Mariana* (with the Page singing), *Dante's Dream* (the head of Beatrice), *Proserpine*, *Water-willow* (which is practically a portrait), *Venus Astarte*, *Mnemosyne* (which was originally intended for Hero, with her signal-lamp for Leander), *La Donna della Finestra*, *The Daydream*, and *The Salutation of Beatrice* (left rather less than completed at my brother's death).

It is apparent that Rossetti—although, as previously demonstrated, he did not by any means confine himself to the head of Mrs. Morris as his type—found this countenance available for subjects of very diverse kinds. And so indeed it is. For a *Pia*, *Pandora*, *Mariana*, *Proserpine*, *Venus Astarte*, or *Mnemosyne*, there was hardly such another head to be found in England. For a *Madonna*, a *Beatrice*, a *Daydream*, or a *Donna della Finestra* (from the *Vita Nuova*—the same personage as “The Lady of Pity,” so designated in some other works by Rossetti), a different head might have been equally appropriate in essence, and, to some eyes and from some points of view, even more appropriate : but, as apprehended and treated by Rossetti, both the mould of face and the expression educed from it seem to be “in choral consonancy” with the personages, and to leave nothing at which a reasonable mind can cavil. The works are there to tell their own tale. Any one who dissents from my view will abide undisturbed in his own. Of course I am not here speaking of any executive merit or demerit in the pictures, but only of the selection and application of the type.

As to male sitters—professional hired models—Rossetti considered that those of Italian nationality were, as a rule, preferable to all others. He used an expression to Christina which I have often heard her quote with a laugh : “An Italian comes to your studio, and he looks to you very like a Guy Fawkes ; but, when you set about drawing him, you find that he is much more like the Antinous.”

These considerations about sitters for my brother's works have led me a long way beyond our present limit of date,

and indeed on to the very end of his life. I must now recur to matters proper to the years 1862-68.

For Dante Rossetti to figure as the correspondent of any newspaper was a rare thing. An occasion did however arise on 15 October 1865, when he wrote to the *Athenæum* to correct a misapprehension into which that paper had fallen, as to his being practically a water-colour painter who only at times worked in oils. He considered it to be "of great professional importance to him" that the point should be rightly understood; and explained that, having originally appeared as an oil-painter, and never having abandoned that medium although he had sometimes worked in water-colour, he had "now, for a good many years past," reverted to oil for "all his chief works."

Another matter of technical practice is brought out in an interesting way in a paper which my brother's intimate friend Mr. Frederick J. Shields, the distinguished painter, contributed to *The Century-Guild Hobby-Horse* (No. 18). Mr. Shields may have been known to Rossetti before 1864, but I cannot fix the precise year. My brother always valued much the works of this artist, and held him in the highest esteem as a devout-natured man of the strictest principle and the warmest feeling; the bond between the two friends being singularly close in the last four or five years of my brother's life, when Shields became his frequent and unflagging visitor, sparing no effort to keep him in heart and hope. Mr. Shields, it seems, had towards 1864 lit upon a certain French "compressed charcoal," which he approved, and showed to Rossetti. The latter at once adopted this material alone for all his larger studies, which were altogether very numerous, and as high in quality as anything he produced, and many of them done in varying tints. When the Franco-German war broke out in 1870—"this truly atrocious and insufferable war," as Rossetti called it in writing to Shields—that chalk became unprocurable, and it has never again been in the market. Fortunately Rossetti had previously laid-in a large stock of it, which he continued using, and even at his death it was not

nearly exhausted. Mr. Shields describes with some minuteness the method adopted by Rossetti in the execution of his crayon-drawings—crayon-*pictures* several of them might deservedly be called; and he remarks that these works can easily be marred if taken out of their protecting glass. Mr. Shields's particulars are well worthy of the attention of artists; and, were my Memoir more closely concerned with details of technique, they should here be summarized.

In these years, lasting up to 1868, the circle of the purchasers of Rossetti's works got pretty nearly completed. Ruskin was no longer among them, nor yet Boyce; Anderson Rose ceased for the time to be in a position to continue; McCracken and Plint, both of them for a while mainstays of my brother's fortunes, were dead. I have heretofore had occasion to mention Mr. Leathart of Newcastle (afterwards of Gateshead), Mr. Rae of Birkenhead, and Mr. Graham of Glasgow and London. These three were kind and pleasant friends, as well as steady liberal purchasers. They all proved to be discerning judges of works of art, and my brother could safely commit to their hands anything that he produced—satisfied that, if he himself had ground to be fairly content with it, their sympathy would rival or even exceed his own. The same may be said of Mr. Frederick R. Leyland, a wealthy ship-owner of Liverpool, and of Mr. L. R. Valpy, a London solicitor, both of whom seem to have begun commissioning towards the middle of 1867. Mr. Graham came later—about the close of 1868. There were also Mr. Mitchell of Bradford, who bought the *Venus Verticordia*; Mr. Craven of Manchester, who bought the *Tibullus and Delia*, and a large number of other works; Lord Mount-Temple, owner of the *Beata Beatrix*; Colonel Gillum, for water-colours and drawings; Mr. Trist, a wine-merchant at Brighton; Mr. Gambart, the great picture-dealer, who, after surmounting some tiffs over the affairs of the Plint estate, took several of Rossetti's works; and some others as well, whom I do not stay to particularize. In course of time the principal collections of Rossetti's art came to be those of Leyland, Graham, and Rae. The former

two have now been dispersed. With the exception of Mr. Rae and Mr. Leathart, I am not certain that there is now any single person owning a large number of the paintings. In the way of studies and sketches Mr. Charles Fairfax Murray, of London and Florence, is well provided.

My brother had not been long settled in Cheyne Walk before he began to find that his studio was below the range of his requirements. As a room it was commodious and ample, but it was not properly a studio. He cast about for various expedients, consulting his friend the architect Mr. Philip Webb. At one time an iron studio in the large garden was thought of; at another, a more solid structure in the same space; at another, the resumption of a biggish set of cab-stables which formed part of the property, and their conversion into a studio. Finally all these more speculative projects were given up, and my brother was contented to carry out a fair amount of alteration in the lighting etc. of his existing studio-apartment. This was in 1871. It served his turn reasonably well, though never quite satisfactory; and, in spite of occasional schemes of a total change of residence, he went on upon this plan up to the close of his life.

Rossetti's art-assistant, Mr. Knewstub, left him after a while, to try his own independent fortunes as a painter; and Mr. Henry Treffry Dunn (who became known to my brother through Mr. Charles Augustus Howell, to be hereafter named) was engaged in his stead. Mr. Dunn had<sup>1</sup> a good deal of artistic experience and aptitude, and proved to be of no small service to Rossetti, both in matters of art, and also, as he was a steady-going man of business, in the general management of the house. He ceased to be an inmate in 1881, but remained in communication with my brother.

The money-affairs of Rossetti, having once become pro-

<sup>1</sup> I speak of Mr. Dunn in the past tense, but not as implying that he is no longer alive. I believe him to be alive; but regret to say that, from the year 1884 or thereabouts, I have not seen and have seldom heard of him.

sperous, continued to be so increasingly for many years; and indeed, notwithstanding some interruptions from ill-health or the fluctuations of the picture-market, they never declined seriously up to the last. He earned what may be called a large income. From notes made at the time I find that in 1865 he realized about £2,050; in 1866, upwards of £1,080; in 1867, little or not at all less than £3,000. At this last date he still owed about £1,000 in one quarter or another. In one of the Family-letters, 29 April 1876, it will be seen that he had made £3,725 in the preceding twelvemonth, and that he regarded this as about his then average. I surmise, however, that it was seldom if ever reached again. For a non-exhibiting painter, selling his works in a somewhat close circle of friends, and (though he was not at all a recluse until a late date in his life) mixing little in general society, this was really a surprising success. It could not have been attained if he had been other than an exceedingly discerning man in the conduct of his professional affairs. Eulogist and detractor alike confess that there was no better hand at a bargain. I incline to think that, on the principle of "diamond cut diamond," this was one of the reasons why Rossetti was in such special favour with Mr. Leyland, of whom Mr. Prinsep testifies "it was the one real friendship of his life." No keener man of business existed than Leyland; and he may have relished—and partly disrelished—finding in Rossetti a foeman or a friend worthy of his steel. My brother understood how far he could go—so far he went; and, having fixed the terms, he knew how to stick by them, unregardful of dubiety or demur. He was abundantly popular, as well as most warmly admired, not only by Mr. Leyland, but generally within his own circle. His naturalness, heartiness, and good-humour were a standing passport to cordiality; and to these endowments, combined with *nous*, something was probably conceded which would have been denied to the mere trafficker in paint. A business-man who is a picture-buyer—and for the last half-century almost all our picture-buyers have been business-men—has his weak side, and, so

far as his relation to art goes, he feels it a privilege to be made free of the art-precincts, and promoted into the intimacy of a great or a distinguished painter. He is apt to find the world of art much more entertaining than the world of commerce; and, while pluming himself upon having converse with persons whose names are in all men's mouths, he can still feel that, in a certain sense, he himself "rules the roast," as all these fine performances would collapse without a purchaser to sustain them. No one knew this better than Rossetti. His net was spread in the sight, but not too obviously in the sight, of several birds. Of the least tinge of servility he was by his very nature—but this I need hardly say—incapable.

Of literary product in these times there was but little. The poems lay buried in Highgate Cemetery, and for some years no more were written, and no thoughts of poetic publicity entertained. So far as I observe, the first fresh verses which he wrote were for his design, *Aspecta Medusa*—eight lines—in 1865. In January 1868 he wrote a sonnet for his picture of *Venus Verticordia*, followed by a Latin distych for his *Portrait of Mrs. Morris*, and in December by his sonnets named *Willow-wood* (and he then declared that he ought never to have been a painter, but rather a poet), and by the sonnet *Newborn Death*. In prose, as far back as 1862-63, he had done a good deal of work upon the Blake book which Alexander Gilchrist had left not quite completed. The amount of what he wrote for insertion in the text of the *Life* has sometimes been over-rated. Its sum-total appears in his *Collected Works*. Besides this, he edited, with a great deal of pains as well as of insight, the poetical compositions of Blake. I will extract, from the volume *Anne Gilchrist*, two of Rossetti's utterances, both quite characteristic:—

"I am working closely this morning at the concluding chapter, in hope of sending it off to-night, or, if not, certainly to-morrow. I was delayed by the necessity I found of going to the Print-room [of the

British Museum] to study Blake's coloured works there, as all I could think of was to dwell on some of these. Facts, and descriptions of facts, are in my line ; but to talk *about* a thing merely is what I could never well manage.

"I really found it impossible to know what to say more of the poems, individually ; but am sincerely of the opinion I express in the text as to the uselessness of doing so. The truth is that, as regards such a poem as *My Spectre*, I do not understand it a bit better than anybody else ; only I know, better than some may know, that it has claims as poetry apart from the question of understanding it, and is therefore worth printing."

## XXVIII.

## INCIDENTS, 1862—1868.

IT has often been stated that my brother, at Cheyne Walk, kept from time to time a large number of animals. This is entirely true. Being fond of "beasts," and having a large garden, with plenty of space for accommodating them either in the open or in corners partitioned off, he freely indulged his taste. He had no particular liking for an animal on the mere ground of its being "pretty"—his taste being far more for what is quaint, odd, or semi-grotesque. Dante's specimens of fauna however were often very sightly, as also often funny and out-of-the-way. I will name some, as they happen to come ; others have passed from memory into the limbo of oblivion.

There were a Pomeranian puppy named Punch, a grand Irish deerhound named Wolf, a barn-owl named Jessie, another owl named Bobby (described by Christina as "a little owl with a very large face and a beak of a sort of egg-shell green"), rabbits, dormice, hedgehogs, two successive wombats, a Canadian marmot or woodchuck, an ordinary marmot, armadilloes, kangaroos, wallabies, a deer, a white mouse with her brood, a racoon, squirrels, a mole, peacocks, wood-owls, Virginian owls, Chinese horned owls, a jackdaw, laughing jackasses (Australian kingfishers), undulated grass-

parrakeets, a talking grey parrot, a raven, chameleons, green lizards, and Japanese salamanders.<sup>1</sup>

Persons who are familiar with the management of pets will easily believe that several of these animals came to a bad end. Punch the puppy would get lost ; one or other bird would get drowned ; the dormice would fight and kill one another, or would eat up their own tails, and gradually perish ; Wolf the deerhound could get no adequate exercise, and was given away ; the parrakeets were neglected at some time that Rossetti was absent from home, and on his return they were found dead. Other animals, owing to their burrowing or reclusive habits, disappeared. An armadillo was not to be found ; and the tale went—I believe it to be not far from true—that, having followed his ordinary practice of burrowing, he turned up from under the hearthstone of a neighbour's kitchen, to the serious dismay of the cook, who opined that, if he was not the devil, there was no accounting for what he could possibly be. The racoon, as winter set in, made up his mind to hibernate. He ensconced himself in a drawer of a large heavy cabinet which stood in the passage outside the studio-door. The drawer was shut upon him, without his presence in it transpiring, and after a while he was supposed to be finally lost to the house. When spring ensued, many mysterious rumbling or tramping or whimpering noises were heard in the passage, or in the studio as coming from the passage. My brother mentioned them to me more than once, and was ready to regard them as one more symptom, by no means the first or only one, that the house was haunted. At last, and I think by mere casualty, the drawer was opened, and the racoon emerged, rather thinner than at his entry. What the other stories of ghosts about the old mansion

<sup>1</sup> Some years ago two or three amusing and authentic articles on Rossetti's "beasts" appeared in some journal—I forget its name. I have the articles somewhere, but have not succeeded in laying hands upon them, to be consulted for my present purpose. I think it manifest that the author of them must be my brother's art-assistant, Mr. Henry Treffry Dunn.

amounted to I have mainly forgotten, but am aware that a servant, a sufficiently strong-minded young woman, saw a spectre by a bed-room door in November 1870. The ghost, according to Miss Caine, "was a woman, and appeared sometimes at the top of the second flight of stairs. She retreated to the room overlooking the Embankment." My brother never beheld any such miscellaneous ghosts, nor did the idea of them disturb him in any sort of way, although in this and other instances he was not at all hostile to the notion that they might possibly be there. I will not here start the question whether a belief in ghosts is in itself evidence of unreason; but I will say that, after making allowance for belief in their possibility, my brother's attitude of mind on the subject was not unreasonable, as he thought that, assuming their existence, they are just as much a part of the scheme of Nature and the Universe as any other part, and therefore not to be regarded with mere panic. A disembodied spirit is the same, *mutatis mutandis*, as an embodied one.

The beasts upon which Dante's affections were prodigalized were the first wombat and his successor the woodchuck. The second wombat, having died immediately, counts for little. No more engagingly lumpish quadruped than the first wombat could be found, and none more obese and comfortable than the woodchuck. They were both tame, especially the woodchuck; and Dante would sit with either in his arms by the half-hour together, dandling them paunch upward, scratching gently at their cheeks or noses, or making the woodchuck's head and hind-paws meet. With the wombat no such operation was possible. Each of them was his house-mate for some time, and each expired without premonition. I do not assume that my brother wept over them, but certainly "his heart was sair." For the wombat (not having yet seen it) he wrote from Penkill Castle the following quatrain:—

"Oh how the family affections combat  
 Within this heart, and each hour flings a bomb at  
 My burning soul! Neither from owl nor from bat  
 Can peace be gained until I clasp my wombat."

The matutinal screeching of one or more of Rossetti's peacocks proved so afflictive to his neighbours that Lord Cadogan, the Ground-landlord, afterwards introduced into all Cheyne Walk leases, as has been stated on good authority, a clause to the effect that the tenants were not to keep any peacocks. Here, extracted from my Diary for December 1871, is a curious anecdote about the peacock, which may perhaps deserve a moment's attention :—

“The deer that Gabriel used to have, now dead, one day saw the peacock making a great display of his train. . . . The deer followed him about ; and, though not displaying any peculiarly marked ill-will, systematically trampled out all his train feathers, one after the other. Shortly after this, Gabriel gave the peacock away.”

There was one of Rossetti's animals—a zebu, or small Brahmin bull—as to which some burlesque particulars have got into print. Mr. Knight relates the story, giving as his authority Mr. Whistler, who is just the man (and so Mr. Knight puts it) for a few humorous embellishments. Mr. Prinsep also relates it to nearly the same effect, and he gives Rossetti himself as his authority. The zebu was seen by my brother and myself, perhaps in 1863, in a beast-show held in Cremorne Gardens. He was a beautiful animal, not larger than a pony of small size. My brother wanted to buy him for some £20, and I co-operated. All that I remember about the subsequent circumstances is the following. The zebu was brought to Tudor House, and charged at a fine pace through the passage into the garden. There he was tethered to a tree by Rossetti's man-servant. My brother, after a day or two, was engaged in inspecting him, when the zebu, more or less irritated by confinement, went in a hostile mood towards the painter, who naturally dodged round the tree-trunk. As this experience showed that the zebu was not a convenient tenant for the garden, Rossetti re-sold him, and he departed in peace. I question whether the animal “tore up by the roots the tree to which it was attached,” though it did display a large amount of physical strength ; or that it

“chased its tormentor round the garden,” in any sense rightly belonging to these words. I was not however present on the occasion, and cannot aver that I even saw the zebu after he had once entered the premises.

I have just been referring to the superstitious or semi-superstitious traits in my brother's character, which were very clearly marked. “Thirteen at table” was a contingency which did not escape his notice. In a letter of his to Madox Brown, dated in 1864, he authorizes his friend to bring, with others, his younger daughter to a dinner, if Brown does not mind the result of thirteen at table—and he was about the last person to mind it. A later dinner was planned for fourteen, which number was reduced to thirteen by a defection at the last moment, and Rossetti hurried away his servant to catch a fourteenth somewhere or other. Mr. Bell Scott says that “he began to call up the spirit of his wife by table-turning,” and relates an incident of the kind happening in 1866; and he adds that “long before that year” my brother had “gone into spiritualism.” I cannot say with accuracy how soon such attempts began. I myself witnessed some in 1865, '66, '68, and '70. I will not enter into details, but will only say that now and again demonstrations occurred (especially some in which a Mr. Bergheim was concerned) which astonished me not a little, and for which I was and am unable to account; at other times there were mere confusion and cross-purposes. Although Rossetti was, as I have already said, not plunged into monotonous gloom by the death of his wife, the idea of her was in these years very constantly present to him. Poignant memories and painful associations were his portion; and he was prone to think that some secret might yet be wrested from the grave.

With the family of his deceased wife my brother did not keep up any close personal relations, yet he did not entirely lose knowledge of them. I observe that in August 1867 he was sending £10 to her brother Harry; and evidence of like kind goes on as late as 1878.

His general habits were social enough. He became a

member of the Garrick Club before 1865 ; afterwards of the Arundel Club ; and, upon its foundation early in 1866, of the Burlington Fine Arts Club. This last membership he (and also I) relinquished at the end of 1867, owing to the expulsion—which was contrary to his sense of fair play, and also to his individual liking—of a fellow-member, a painter of much distinction. I do not give the name, nor other particulars. The other memberships died out in course of time—with no special reason except a change in habits and interests on his part. At the Arundel Club he used to meet Mr. Knight, Mr. Rose, and others with whom he was on very easy terms. Here also he met Mr. W. S. Gilbert, who has become the inexhaustible purveyor of laughter to two continents. He did not take to Mr. Gilbert personally ; but, when the *Bab Ballads* began appearing in *Fun* in 1867, Rossetti was enormously tickled with their eccentricities of humour and gymnastics of the ludicrous, and I have heard him recite many of these examples of “excellent fooling” in all sorts of companies. He was never tired of them, and loud and contagious guffaws attested that neither were his auditors tired. I mention this small matter, not so much for its own sake as because it illustrates my brother’s alacrity at doing profuse justice to the talents even of a writer for whom he neither professed nor felt the least predilection. Besides his general sociality in these years—evidenced by liking to see his friends about him, whether to dinner or otherwise, and by going out to dine not unfrequently, which was perhaps principally towards 1869—my brother was really a good-natured and even an accommodating host to some of his familiars, when it served their convenience. Thus Mr. Sandys became an established inmate of the house for about a year and a quarter, terminating in the summer of 1867 ; and another painter, Mr. George Chapman, who was in serious ill-health and otherwise “out of luck,” was there for a shorter period, some three or four months. He died before attaining middle age ; viewed by my brother with considerable regard for his facility of invention and grace in

portraiture, though his loose and haphazard methods of work were often the subject of some amicable remonstrance. Other friends of this period were Mr. and Mrs. Spartali and their beautiful daughters ; some other members of the Greek community in London, especially the Dilberoglues, and various branches of the Ionides family ; Mr. Dodgson (the "Lewis Carroll" of *Alice in Wonderland*), who, being a good amateur photographer, took some few excellent likenesses of Rossetti ; and Mr. Charles Fairfax Murray, who, when a mere youth, became known to my brother as an artistic aspirant, and who developed into a painter of good standing, and a vendor and collector of works of art.

There was another young man who, at one time or other, played a considerable part in Rossetti's life, and of whom it may behove me here to say something definite. His name was Charles Augustus Howell. He survived my brother, but has been dead now some few years. It was in or about 1856 that I casually met a man of some twenty-five years of age, of gentlemanly address, who had once been in the army. I will designate him by his initials, J. F. H. (the name is not Howell). Through me, and through his own rather pushing ways, he became known to various members of my circle, including my brother ; who, being kind-heartedly anxious to help him out of circumstances of great money-embarrassment, promoted his interests to the best of his power. J. F. H. made acquaintance with Mr. Howell, an Anglo-Portuguese young gentleman about seventeen years of age, and introduced him to us ; a very well-grown, pleasant-spoken, sprightly youth, looking some few years older than he then was. After a while, but not until some mischief had been done in attempts to serve him, J. F. H. was found by Howell to be a very disgraceful character. Howell gave us notice of this, and J. F. H. was abandoned to his fate—which proved to be an equally dismal and well-deserved one. This disclosure may have been towards the end of 1857. Mr. Howell knew something (we did not) of the Italian patriot Felice Orsini, who figures in most memories as more assassin

than patriot, but in fact he was both; and Howell was in some way (but I am sure without any conscious connivance) mixed up with the procuring or the dispatching of the infernal machine or machines which in January 1858 Orsini exploded against Napoleon III. Before the explosion took place Howell had quitted England, and returned to his family in Portugal. In 1864 he was back in London; and he sought out my brother and myself, who had always liked him, and felt much indebted to him for unmasking J. F. H., and so preventing us from continuing to countenance the latter in any way.

London can have contained in 1864 few more agreeable young men than Charles Augustus Howell. He united the attractions of youthfulness and of *déplomb*. His face was handsome though rather *outré*; not a little like that of King Philip IV. in the magnificent full-length by Velasquez in the National Gallery, but superior in manliness, the expression of talent, and hair which, being dark chestnut in tint, was free from the vapid effeminacy which marks the flaxen locks of Philip. Howell had seen a good deal of the world, had many accomplishments and a ready insight in fine art, and was a capital and most entertaining talker. He had not any artistic faculty of his own; but was nevertheless an excellent facsimilist (and as such acknowledged by Ruskin) of water-colours and the like. Throughout Rossetti's circle he at once became a prime favourite. He thus formed the acquaintance of Mr. Ruskin, who engaged him as his secretary, and who, I believe, cherished him extremely for some while, and placed the most implicit confidence in him. I am neither required nor qualified to enter into an account of the relations between Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Howell. I know that they came to a close towards the end of 1870; and my impression is that a highly distinguished friend of Rossetti, one who liked Howell enormously at first, and disliked him intensely afterwards, had something to do with this result. This change of feeling put Rossetti into a position of embarrassment, between the friend who wanted him to cut Howell, and Howell himself,

who as yet continued to be much to his taste. Mr. Collingwood, in his book on Ruskin,<sup>1</sup> makes some statements disadvantageous to Howell, impugning his honesty. As I know nothing about the details, I will leave them as they stand, and will also for the present leave Howell, who will more than once re-appear as we proceed.

Mr. Bell Scott and his wife, leaving Newcastle-on-Tyne, settled in London in 1864, and from this date forward Rossetti saw his old friend frequently, and continued to value him highly. He had visited Scott in Newcastle at the end of 1862, and then sat (to Mr. Downey) for that photograph which is the best known of all his portraits—a standing figure, three-quarters length, in an Inverness cape (or Tyneside wrapper, as the garment was then frequently called). In the autumn of 1863 he revisited with me a few Belgian cities; and in 1864 he was in Paris for a short while—I think, the very last of his small foreign trips. Towards the same time when Scott settled in London, another old friend; Thomas Woolner, dropped out of Rossetti's circle—a matter which I always deeply regretted. I cannot say that my brother was to blame, although a person much more tolerant or much meeker than he might have deserved commendation for adopting a different course. He once gave me a very explicit account of the facts, to the following effect. He was among friends, talking of Woolner with his accustomed cordiality, when one of them—the same whom, in referring to Howell, I designated as “highly distinguished”—said to him, “I am rather surprised to hear you speaking of Woolner in such terms, for he, to my knowledge, speaks of *you* in very different terms.” This staggered Rossetti, who, pursuing the point, became convinced that Woolner, not on one occasion only but as the general tone of his speech when the subject arose, talked of him in a way quite inconsistent with genuine regard, or even with considerate allowance. That my brother had his faults is amply true, and it is quite possible that what

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii., pp. 59-61, 115.

Woolner commented upon with asperity were real faults, and not vamped-up imputations; but to Woolner himself Rossetti had given no cause of complaint at any date, recent or remote. My brother hereupon ceased to see Woolner; he got to regard him with antipathy, and sometimes to speak of him with bitterness. The sculptor indeed was well known for his biting tongue, and there were perhaps few of his acquaintances who, present or absent, were not at some time subjected to its sharpness. Some while afterwards—in 1868—my brother dropped in to see me one evening, quickly followed by Woolner (for I never myself was at variance with him, although in the course of later years we drifted apart). I viewed the encounter with some alarm; but it passed off without anything unpleasant, each of the two now sundered friends treating the other with ease which faintly simulated good-will. I was then in hopes that they might become reconciled; but no steps were taken by either with such an object, and I imagine they never met again. Woolner did indeed call at my brother's house in the summer of 1870; but the latter on that day was "not at home" to any one, and he did not hear of the visit until his once intimate comrade had quitted his threshold.

From Mr. Ruskin also there was a most unfortunate severance. The two men liked one another—at one time I am sure they even loved one another—but ominous discrepancies began to appear not very long after Rossetti had settled in Cheyne Walk, and gradually these became irremediable, or at any rate they remained unremedied. There is a certain fatal divergence between an autocratic Mentor who tells a painter what he ought and ought not to do, and the painter himself, who, having an ardent invention, and a decided opinion as to the range and the limitations of his own powers of work, is expected to conform to the critic's notions instead. It is notorious moreover—and therefore I need not scruple to say it—that Mr. Ruskin's opinions as to what is right or wrong, to be or not to be recommended, in artistic execution, have differed very much at different times;

and that, with characteristic but embarrassing candour, he has unsaid in one year several things which he had said in previous years. This may have suited himself, but cannot be supposed to have suited the living subjects of his comments.

I have by me four letters from Mr. Ruskin to my brother, proper to the summer of 1865; the fourth alone is dated—18 July 1865. They must all have been consequent upon his seeing, in the painter's studio, the picture of *Venus Verticordia*, with its foreground of roses and honeysuckles. They are somewhat long, and I only extract a few sentences (not always consecutive in the letters themselves) to show how matters stood:—

“(1) It is very good and pretty of you to answer so. You are, it seems, under the (for the present) *fatal* mistake of thinking that you will ever learn to paint well by painting badly—*i.e.*, coarsely. But come back to me when you have found out your mistake, or (if you are right in your method) when you can do better. I am very glad, at all events, to understand *you* better than I did, in the grace and sweetness of your letters.—(2) I purposely used the word ‘wonderfully’ painted about those flowers. They were wonderful to me, in their realism; awful—I can use no other word—in their coarseness. Come and see me *now*, if you like.—(3) Please come now the first fine evening—tea at seven.—(4) I am very grateful to you for this letter, and for the feelings it expresses towards me. You meant them—the first and second—just as rightly as this pretty third; and yet they conclusively showed me that we could not at present—nor for some time yet—be companions any more, though true friends, I hope, as ever. I do not choose any more to talk to you until you can recognize my superiorities as *I* can yours. You simply do not see certain characters in me. A day may come when you will be able; then—without apology, without restraint, merely as *being* different from what you are now—come back to me, and we will be as we used to be.”

Two things are clear from these extracts: 1, That the tone of Rossetti's letters was such as Ruskin did not, and probably could not, complain of; 2, That Ruskin, after encouraging Rossetti to call upon him at once, stringently forbade him

to do so. I will in no wise discuss whether Ruskin was right or wrong in all this ; but of one thing we may be tolerably certain—that Rossetti did *not* call upon him. I assume that he did not in any way reply to the last letter.

The only sequel that I know of to this correspondence of 1865 is that on 4 December 1866 I dined with Mr. Ruskin and his family, by invitation, and a very pleasant evening did I spend in the house. Ruskin expressed to me a wish to resume seeing my brother, and I suggested whether he would call in Cheyne Walk, and, if he did so, would be cautious in avoiding any topic of possible irritation. On the following day Ruskin did, in the friendliest spirit, make the visit. I was not present, but learned that "all went off most cordially—Ruskin expressing great admiration of the Beatrice in a Death-trance" (*Beata Beatrix*), on which my brother was then engaged. I am afraid however that this call was not followed up in any sort of way. Rossetti, very likely, did not return the visit—partly from general indisposition to any such regulated performance, and partly apprehending that some new cause of difficulty or dissension might arise. He had better have risked the chance, and gone without delay. I think that the very last occasion when the old friends met was in September 1868. Ruskin then called on Rossetti, and raised some question whether the latter would not join him in efforts for social ameliorations on a systematic scale ; but this was not the painter's line, and he did not take any practical steps about it. After this, there was, to the best of my belief, no further personal meeting. In August 1869 Mr. Ruskin was elected Slade Professor of Fine Art in Oxford University ; and his time was at first shared between London and Oxford, and ultimately he settled in the latter city. Anyhow a sad ending had come to a friendship which had once been so affectionate, and which, in the annals of art, might some day almost count as historical. At least, their parting was not in anger. Moreover, up to 1870 or thereabouts, my brother continued to hear a good deal about Mr. Ruskin, as Mr. Howell remained as yet his secretary :

and there is a letter from Ruskin to Rossetti, as late as August 1870, perfectly amicable, and including a reference to the *Poems* then published.

In these years Rossetti developed a kind of passion for collecting curious objects of art—chairs and tables, cabinets, hangings, looking-glasses (he had a special fancy for convex mirrors), pictures in a very minor way, and most particularly Japanese prints and oddities, and blue china, whether Japanese or Chinese. With the European he never concerned himself. He built up elaborate fireplaces in his house, with old carved oak, antiquated Dutch tiles, and the like. He also raised in his garden a large tent or marquee, in which we often dined in the summer, beginning with 1868. A friendly rivalry subsisted between Mr. Whistler and him, especially as to China and Japan. There must of course have been in London some fine collections of “blue china” before Rossetti’s time. Mr. Huth’s collection was one; but my brother’s zeal and persistence were such as to send up prices in the market. The well-known Art-dealers, Messrs Marks, acted for him in many cases. One of his earliest purchases was that of the whole collection of blue china formed by the retiring Italian Ambassador, the Marquis d’Azeglio. Its cost to my brother was I think £200. In March 1867 he bought of Messrs. Marks two hawthorn-pots (Rossetti invented this name) which, with their covers, cost him £120. He paid in the form of a picture, not of money down. In fact, what between free expenditure and good taste in choice, he formed a very fine display of blue china, which made his big sunlit drawing-room a sight to see. As to “the Japanese mania,” which has by this time half-revolutionized European art of all kinds, I hardly know what Londoner preceded Mr. Whistler and my brother. They made bids against each other in Paris as well as in London, and were possibly a little nettled to learn in Paris that there was another painter—the renowned Tissot—who outstripped them both in acquisition. Rossetti gave a deal of time as well as energy to the collecting of china etc. I have seen him come home late, rather fagged from his

eager pursuit, with a cargo of blue either actually in hand or ordered to arrive; and, as he dropped into an easy-chair, he called out "Pots, pots!" with a thrilling accent. It spoke at once of achievement and of despondency. Such may have been the tone of Alexander of Macedon when he deplored that there were no more worlds to conquer.

In the way of pictures his most notable purchase was a moderate-sized Botticelli, obtained at Colnaghi's sale in March 1867 for the small sum of £20 (towards 1880 he resold it to a friend for £315)—a half-length figure, highly characteristic of its painter, of a young woman in whitish drapery, in a close architectural background. Botticelli was little or not at all in demand at that now remote date. If my brother had not something to do with the vogue which soon afterwards began to attach to that fascinating master, I am under a misapprehension.

In October 1869 I made a jotting: "The collecting-passion seems extinct in Gabriel these several months." I cannot say that it had not any recurrences from time to time; but its force was now spent, and never afterwards returned to a like level.

## XXIX.

### *BEGINNINGS OF ILL-HEALTH—PENKILL CASTLE.*

DANTE ROSSETTI had naturally a strong constitution. His muscular strength was only moderate, but neither in this respect nor in others was he a weakling. He was not constantly ailing, on and off, nor frequently laid aside from work because the state of his health would not admit of his attending to it. He had some decided illnesses, and every now and then he was "out of sorts"—an indigestive or feverish attack, a violent cold, or what not. On the whole he was a healthy child and boy, and, up to the autumn of 1866, when his age was thirty-eight, a healthy man. Neither should it be supposed that after that date he was continually

ill. In various respects he remained well; and there were intervals when one could hardly say that anything distinct was amiss with him. He as yet bore attacks of illness well enough—impatiently, as was his bent, but not querulously nor faint-heartedly.

Towards the autumn of 1866 he became subject to a complaint (I do not care to define it) which required surgical treatment from time to time. The first instance was in August 1868. He minded this not at all; and I have seen him resume painting within five minutes of one of the slight operations. But there was worse in store for him.

Insomnia began in 1867. Why did it begin? I consider that painful thoughts, partly but not wholly connected with his wife and her death, were at the root of it. Rossetti was one of the worst men living to cope with this fell antagonist. No doubt there must be some persons of a sedate or phlegmatic temperament who will make up their minds to do with little sleep if they cannot get much, and will wile away the sleepless hours in some quiet occupation, such as reading; or they may even fully submit to the inconvenience, and simply make their working day all the longer for the privation. Rossetti was not one of these, unhappily for himself. His active imagination gave him no respite; and to be sleepless was to be agitated and miserable and haggard as well. Haunted by memories, harried by thoughts and fantasies, he tossed and turned on the unrestful bed.

Towards the end of the summer of 1867 his eyesight began to fail. Sunlight or artificial light became increasingly painful to him, producing sensations of giddiness etc. Even the gas-lamps in the streets affected him distressingly. He consulted the famous oculists, Sir William Bowman and Dr. Bader. They both assured him that his eyes were not organically wrong, but that the weakness of sight depended upon general overstrain and nervous upset. He also consulted Sir William Gull and Mr. Marshall, and later on (1870) Dr. Critchett, who confirmed the same opinion. Dr. Critchett's view was that the eyes were naturally more than duly flat;

and that unconscious muscular power, which had, when in full health, been exerted to counteract this, was now no longer at the patient's command in equal measure. All this was well, so far as it went ; yet it was hardly capable of re-assuring a painter who found himself impeded in painting, and who too well remembered that his father had become nearly blind. He began using strong spectacles, often two pairs one over the other ; and, as the years progressed, he scarcely ever took the spectacles off, persisting in wearing them even when he was merely seated in talk with friends. In September 1868 he went with Mr. Dunn on a brief trip to Stratford-on-Avon, Warwick, and Kenilworth ; and late in the month he again left town for Penkill Castle, Ayrshire, visiting on the way Leeds, where a large art-collection had been got up. With the authorities of this exhibition he had already had some to-do, as they had accepted from the owners certain pictures by Rossetti, which he wanted to be withheld, and to this requirement they reluctantly yielded. He did not like that any of his productions, possibly of secondary merit, should ever appear here and there in a scattered sort of way, but wished to reserve himself for any time—if ever this should come—when he might collect a number of his best works, to be viewed in their proper relation one with another. Such a time never did come, though it was often kept in his mind's eye.

Penkill Castle is the seat of Miss (Alice) Boyd, a Scotch lady then verging on middle age, who was on terms of very intimate friendship with Mr. Bell Scott. She had been known to my brother for some few years. Mr. Scott was then staying at the Castle ; and both Miss Boyd and he did a great deal to cheer and divert Rossetti. A lady of sweeter character and temper than Miss Boyd, or of more delicacy and liveliness of address, does not exist. Her intellectual power is high, and her gift for painting noticeable. The Family-letters show a few details as to this in some respects most pleasant sojourn. At a rather later date, in writing to Mr. Shields, the term which Rossetti used for Miss Boyd was "a rarely precious woman."

Besides Miss Boyd and Mr. Scott, there was a second lady staying in 1868 in Penkill Castle—Miss Losh, who was a cousin of Miss Boyd, but much older, sixty-seven years of age. Miss Losh took an extraordinary liking for my brother—in whose manner, not to speak of his genius, there was something singularly fascinating to many and to very diverse persons. Mr. Scott, in his *Autobiographical Notes*, shows that he himself had no great predilection for Miss Losh, saying that she

“had somehow or other taken a jealous dislike to me, thinking I had too much influence over her younger cousin, who entertained me so much, and who lived with us in London in the winter. She had therefore looked forward to Rossetti’s appearance, fully intending to play him off against me, which accordingly she did in the most fantastic way.”

Mr. Scott approved as little of Rossetti’s dealings with Miss Losh as of that lady’s dealings with Rossetti. His narrative continues as follows :—

“The old lady’s admiration had culminated in an offer of a loan of money to any amount, to prevent him using his eyes in painting, or in any other trying occupation. He would get better and repay her, but till then he might depend on her. . . . She intended indeed that this plan should be a secret one between them; but no sooner had we [Scott and Rossetti] started on our daily constitutional than he entrusted it to me [his impulsive nature was far from good at keeping secrets] with much effusion and gratitude, at the same time protesting he would never think of availing himself of her kindness. This determination I strenuously encouraged; and we heard no more of the matter until after the old lady’s death, when the evidences to the contrary were all too clear.”

These “evidences to the contrary” consisted of an I.O.U., or some such document, which Rossetti gave to Miss Losh, and which was found after her death, and was destroyed (in my brother’s interest) by a friendly hand—I will not say whose. The kind, generous Miss Losh died suddenly in

March 1872, after an operation, seemingly quite successful, for cataract. That Mr. Scott entertained a very bad opinion of my brother in connexion with this whole transaction I know as a fact ; for, very soon after Dante's death, he narrated the circumstances to me, in a tone and in terms of acrimony which startled me not a little. But there may be two sides to this affair, as to most others. In my Diary for 3 November 1868 I find the following passage :—

“Gabriel came back to-night from Penkill. He says his eyes are decidedly not better, though on the whole I think he seems a little less despondent about their essential condition. Miss Losh, the aunt [should be cousin] of Miss Boyd, has been at Penkill all this time. She pressed Gabriel (whom she had never known before) most urgently to accept a loan of £1,000, to keep his affairs in a comfortable condition in case of his having to intermit work. He had much ado to stave off this offer ; and she has positively made him accept £100 loan, for which the cheque is to reach him directly.”

This is of course my brother's own account of the matter. There is no corroboration of it known to me. Perhaps it needs none. At all events, to my own mind, it is transparently and absolutely true. I would not dispute that he ought, at some time before the death of a benefactress who would take no denial, to have made an opportunity for repaying the loan ; but her death, as I have said, was sudden, and between November 1868 and March 1872 there may have been communications passing between the two, unknown both to Mr. Scott and to myself.

At Penkill Rossetti's sleeping, though not his eyesight, had improved. Returning to London on 3 November,<sup>1</sup> he was unable to paint until the beginning of December ; a tolerable proof, were any needed, that his notions about failure of sight were not mere fancy. My Diary, 6

<sup>1</sup> “The end of *September*,” as mentioned in Mr. Scott's book, vol. ii., p. 110, is decidedly a mistake.

November, contains the following details, which I may as well extract :—

“Gabriel says his eyes are certainly rather worse than better, in comparison with what they were when he left for Penkill. At the same time, they are by no means now so bad as his apprehensions some little while ago had foreboded. His mind seems more quiescent on the subject altogether. He says the state of the eyes is now in detail this:—Objects close by he can only see fairly well with spectacles. This however is nothing new, and he has not found it needful to adopt spectacles of such high power as some medical advice had suggested. Objects a little way off, or distant, he sees completely enough; but invariably as if with a veil interposed, which he describes as like a combination of the curling of smoke and the effervescing of champagne. By experience he now believes that this interposed veil is in fact the spectrum of the last preceding object he had been looking at; for he sees all spectra with extra distinctness—would, for instance, after looking at Brown’s profile, and then at a blank wall, see the profile there distinctly enough to know it as Brown, or to know the difference between such a spectrum-profile of Brown and a like spectrum-profile of me. The uncertainty of objects in a room, to his eyes, is sufficient to make him keep on spectacles continually. In painting for a longish time, the sight does not get worse at the end than the beginning; but the accumulated irritation of the weak sight makes him leave off.”

About a month after this date, or at the opening of December 1868, my brother was so far improved as to be able to resume art-work. He began by doing some crayon-heads of Mrs. Morris, one of them representing her as Pandora. The state of his eyesight continued to give him much serious anxiety from time to time. I question whether it ever became quite so bad as in the autumn of 1868, unless maybe in the spring of 1870.

From this account of the facts one sees that, long before the year 1868 came to a close, and even before it began, Rossetti had two formidable foes to his well-being and his power of work; not to speak of the surgical matter, though that also was far from being a mere trifle. If we reflect

what it must be to a man of high-strung nerves and restless imagination to be unable to sleep at night, and what it must be to a painter to be wholly or partially unable to paint by day, we shall discern some reason for sympathizing with this hard-bested artist, and may perhaps be inclined to reject with some impatience the notion, put forward in one or other book, that there was "nothing whatever the matter with him." To suggest that a more or less uneasy conscience was at the bottom of it all does not improve the case. This only adds a shadowy insinuation of wrongdoing to a direct imputation of fractious or pusillanimous fancies.

## XXX.

*PREPARATIONS FOR PUBLISHING POEMS.*

IN August 1869 my brother went back on a visit to Penkill, first spending a day or two at Ravenshill near Carlisle, with Miss Losh. Both Miss Boyd and Scott received him again at Penkill.

Mr. Scott, in his *Autobiographical Notes*, has given some pages to the two Scotch visits, and I must follow him into a few details. He considers that it was himself who, on the occasion of the first visit, seconded as he was by Miss Boyd and Miss Losh, re-aroused the interest of Rossetti in his poetry, past and prospective. When Rossetti was downcast about the condition of his eyes and other things, Scott said, "Live for your poetry"; and this exhortation, he considers, had a marked effect. My brother, being disabled for a while from painting, would perchance of himself have bethought him to some purpose of his other and not less important faculty, that of a poet; but of course I raise no objection to what Mr. Scott here puts forward as a statement of fact. Mr. Scott however writes as if he were quite unaware of what is also a fact—namely, that in the spring of 1868 Rossetti had already made an appearance in public print as a poet; introducing, into a pamphlet-review of pictures of

that year, three sonnets recently written for paintings of his own—*Lady Lilith*, *Sibylla Palmifera*, and *Venus Verticordia*. The two former have since been entitled *Body's Beauty* and *Soul's Beauty*. This pamphlet-review was the joint work of Mr. Swinburne and myself, and the sonnets were inserted in Mr. Swinburne's section of the publication. I can remember that the issuing of these sonnets was done with some definite idea of following them up by other public appearances in verse, and therefore the conception of "living for his poetry" was decidedly in Rossetti's mind before he went to Penkill in September 1868. The publication in the spring of 1868 was a sort of feeler, leading on to the printing of several sonnets in the *Fortnightly Review* for March 1869. In this latter year, soon before starting for Penkill, he obtained a Printer's estimate for the printing of various poems—those old compositions of which some copies remained in his hands after the consignment of his chief MS. to his wife's coffin, and some few others of later date. At Penkill on this second occasion he wrote several other poems—the ballad of *Troy Town*, part of *Eden Bower*, the beginning of the long lyric of *The Stream's Secret*, *The Orchard-pit* (prose synopsis for poem), etc. For *The Stream's Secret* he appropriated bodily the felicitous title which Scott had already bestowed upon a sonnet of his own. Scott was very properly annoyed at this; but Rossetti would have it so, and so it was. The "stream" in this poem is (as Mr. Sharp says) "the brown-pooled, birch-banked Penwhapple in Ayrshire, that gurgles and lapses from slope to slope till it reaches Girvan Water"; and some of the verses were written down in a cave going by the name of a Covenanter of the seventeenth century, Bennan's Cave. It has generally been stated that *The Stream's Secret* was composed wholly at Penkill. One of the Family-letters shows this to be a mistake, as the great majority of the poem was only produced in March 1870, at Scalands, Sussex.

Proceeding with his narrative for the year 1869, Mr. Scott relates, not indeed an attempt at suicide on Rossetti's part,

but what he regarded as a manifest impulse towards suicide. I will give his own words, which are vivid enough :—

“Miss Boyd sometimes drove us about the country, instead of leaving us to take those long walks I found so trying in the previous year. One day she took us to the Lady’s Glen, a romantic ravine in which the stream falls into a black pool round which the surrounding vertical rocks have been worn, by thousands of years of rotating flood, into a circular basin, called, as many such have been designated, the Devil’s Punchbowl. We all descended to the overhanging margin of the superincumbent rock ; but never shall I forget the expression of Gabriel’s face when he bent over the precipice, peering into the unfathomed water dark as ink, in which sundry waifs flew round and round like lost souls in hell. In no natural spectacle had I ever known him to take any visible interest ; the expression on his pale face did not indicate such interest ; it said, as both Miss Boyd and I at the same moment interpreted it, ‘One step forward, and I am free !’ But his daily talk of suicide had not given him courage. The chance so suddenly and unexpectedly brought within his grasp paralysed him. I advanced to him—trembling, I confess, for I could not speak. I could not have saved him. We were standing on a surface slippery as glass by the wet green lichen. Suddenly he turned round, and put his hand in mine, an action which showed he was losing self-command, and that fear was mastering him. When we were safely away, we all sat down together without a word, but with faces too conscious of each other’s thoughts. . . . The feeble-minded English law declares the suicide to be of unsound mind, whereas he is anything but that. It is the privilege of man alone, the only reasoning suicidal creature in the world.”

I am not sure that I ever heard this matter in any way mentioned during my brother’s lifetime, or until the appearance of Mr. Scott’s book (1892). The only serious question arising in connexion with it is this—Did Rossetti really contemplate suicide? This I think quite possible, but by no means evident. Dismissing the rather unkind remarks that certain talk “had not given him courage,” and that “fear was mastering him,” I must observe that a man who was “standing on a surface slippery as glass,” on the brink

of a "precipice," above an "unfathomed water dark as ink," might very well put his hand into that of a friend, to be assisted backwards, without having at the previous moment projected self-destruction. For the rest, Mr. Scott seems, by the last sentence in my extract, to consider that suicide is, under certain conditions, a very rational act—an opinion in which I take leave to agree with him. He is of course wrong in saying that the "English law declares the suicide to be of unsound mind"; for there is no law whatever to this effect, but only, in numerous instances, the opinion or the good-nature of a Coroner's Jury.

Mr. Scott's next anecdote purports that Rossetti found in a country road a chaffinch which he picked up, and which he supposed at the time to be the spirit of his wife. I will not give the details, but am fully satisfied that they are in all essential respects perfectly true. I question however whether, at one moment of this odd transaction, Rossetti's face wore a "curiously ferocious look." To the eye of that particular old friend—a friend, in the summer of 1869, already of twenty-one years' standing<sup>1</sup>—there may have been a look so describable. For myself, I knew my brother's face pretty well. It was a fine face, with "looks" often varying. Most of those known to me I should call noble, and not any of them "curiously ferocious." Much about the date of the "curiously ferocious" incident, or on 27 August 1869, Rossetti was writing to Mr. Shields about Scott in the following terms: "the best of philosophic and poetic natures, a man of the truest genius, and one of my eldest companions." "Look here upon this picture, and on this."

The printing of my brother's poems was now going on actively, and he received and revised proofs at Penkill Castle. His idea (as I had noted just before he started for the North)

<sup>1</sup> I gather, from certain statements in Mr. Scott's book, that this was chiefly written in 1877, and on to 1882, the year of my brother's death. Scott himself died in 1890. So he was at that time, when he left his work ready for publication, a friend of forty-two years' standing to my brother, living and dead.

was to have them "printed for future use in any way he may like"; or (to use his own words written from Penkill), "my object is to keep them by me as stock for a future volume." The prevalent notion appears to be that he wanted to diffuse the poems in a limited circle as a privately printed volume. This is but partially correct. He wanted to have the poems by him in a convenient form, and therefore a printed form, and, when he had so got them, to settle what might best be done with the sheets. But the whole affair of the privately printed copies soon became obsolete.

For some while past some friends had urged Rossetti to recover the MS. buried in his wife's coffin, and thus to obtain possession, not only of copies of several poems completer than the copies (made up from scraps and reminiscence) which were already in his hands, but also of some compositions of which he retained no example whatever. The chief among these was the important production named *Jenny*. I cannot say with precision who these friends were. The facts seem to mark Mr. Henry Virtue Tebbs (John Seddon's brother-in-law), who was then a Proctor at Doctors' Commons, and Mr. Charles Augustus Howell, as prominent among them. From this suggestion Rossetti hung back for a while, but ultimately he assented. The feelings which impelled him to hang back, and those which induced him to assent, will be manifest to any thoughtful and feeling mind. The subject, in all its bearings, is a painful one, and I shall not dilate upon it. I will only say that, when my brother finally wrote to me explaining what had been done, I replied expressing the opinion—to which I adhere—that he had acted aright. The disinterment of the MS. was effected towards 10 October 1869. My brother had returned from Penkill on 20 September. Mr. Tebbs managed some legal business; Mr. Howell was present in the cemetery along with the workmen at the moment of unearthing the MS. Along with Howell was, I suppose, Dr. Llewellyn Williams, of Kennington, who immediately afterwards undertook the disinfecting of the papers; not any one else, so far as I recollect. Though this affair was

conducted in all privacy, some gossip about it commenced pretty soon, as I observe by a letter, dated in June 1870, from Lord Aberdare, the Home Secretary, well known to my brother ever since the first project of the Llandaff Triptych, from whom it had been necessary to obtain a faculty for opening the grave. Mr. Hall Caine's brief account of the matter—no other details seem to have appeared in print—is as follows :—

“At length preliminaries were complete ; and one night, seven and a half years after the burial, a fire was built by the side of the grave, and then the coffin was raised and opened. The body is described as perfect upon coming to light. Whilst this painful work was being done, the unhappy author of it was sitting, alone and anxious and full of self-reproaches, at the house of the friend who had charge of it. He was relieved and thankful when told that all was over.”

So now at last Rossetti was in possession of the correct form of his old poems ; and he proceeded to get these, along with some new ones, published in the ordinary mode. In copying them out he was actively assisted by Mr. Fairfax Murray. He thought of Mr. John Murray as publisher, and some one else thought of Messrs. Blackwood, who indeed made a direct proffer of their own ; but neither of these schemes came to anything, and the publisher with whom an arrangement was effected was Mr. F. S. Ellis, then of King Street, Covent Garden, more generally known as a leading bookseller. Mr. Ellis afterwards removed to the old-established book-shop, No. 29 New Bond Street (Shelley's friend Mr. Hookham had once been there). Here Mr. Ellis carried on business with more than one successive partner, and the firm is now represented by Messrs. Ellis (nephew of F. S. Ellis) and Elvey, the publishers of the present volumes. My brother, for some few years before 1869, had been a customer of Mr. F. S. Ellis for books, and their relation had become one of a very friendly character ; and no one could have managed the publishing business for Rossetti with more judicious zeal, or

in a more thoroughly liberal and confiding spirit, than Mr. Ellis—a man of very good literary taste and acquirements, as proved of late years by various performances of his own.

My brother was in some respects a singular compound of self-reliance and self-mistrust. He relied on himself so far as the working-impulse and the actual work were concerned. He mistrusted himself with regard to the effect of his work upon other minds. No man was prouder, or more resolved to have his way, and make his way as well. Few men were more entirely free from vanity—although indeed, in his latest years, there was more of a fusion between vanity and pride than there had been in all his boyhood, youth, and mature manhood. Owing to pride present, and vanity absent, he was the most natural of men. You could take him, or you could leave him alone ; but, if you took him, you had to take him such as he intrinsically was, without any attempt on his part at adjusting the mutual relationship by concession, compromise, half-measures, or a veneering of attributes not his own. With most people he was easy, open, and hearty ; with many, tolerant ; with others, intolerant ; with all, he was himself. Intellectually he was so frank that it might almost be said he blurted himself out. As to poetry, he was perfectly conscious of having a special faculty, and of having done some good work. In fact, he considered (and I think justly) that his executive attainment in verse was riper and surer than in painting. To most of us it might appear that a man of this description would care next to nought for anything but the work produced ; would abide in his own knowledge of where he had succeeded to the full, and where he had faltered ; and would view with solid or stolid indifference the opinions entertained on the subject by other people. Yet this was not the case. It was here that his self-mistrust as to the effect of his work upon other minds came in. That he had cordial admirers he knew very well ; but he thought he might also have cordial detractors. As soon as he had decided to publish, he became solicitous that persons well-affected to the book should give expression to their views in print. I

have no sort of recollection of the exact steps which were taken ; but am sure that something was done, with his cognizance, so that certain editors might entrust the book to certain writers for reviewing, or certain writers might bespeak it of certain editors. My diary for 11 October 1869 contains the following passage :—

“ Gabriel called, and talked about his intended publication of poems in the Spring. He thinks it desirable to make sure of the reviewers as far as possible, and thinks he can count upon handsome notices in various reviews. His plan therefore would be to send the book first to two or three papers that he can count on, and that are of leading importance ; wait for the appearance of the critiques in these ; and only then send the book to other papers, which it would reach, having already a considerable prestige about it. This is skilful scheming ; but for my own part (as I told Gabriel) I would not diplomatize at all, but just leave the book to take its chance, and feel pretty confident of the result into the bargain.”

I have been treating this matter with great plainness, and openly showing that, in my opinion, my brother's feeling and his line of action, in relation to public criticism, were other than they should have been. I am therefore all the better entitled to confute over-statements on the same subject which appear elsewhere. Mr. Bell Scott (who has gone further than other writers in this direction, and has served as authority for some repetitions of the allegation) expresses himself thus :—

“ He to the last moment *would* work the oracle, and get all his friends to prepare laudatory critical articles to fill all the leading journals.”

No reflective person will believe this averment about “ *all* his friends ” and “ *all* the leading journals.” It bears on the very face of it exaggeration, and exaggeration with a motive the reverse of friendly. But I will go further, and express my serious doubt whether Dante Rossetti did “ get ” any one of his friends to prepare a critical article, laudatory or other-

wise. He had several ardent admirers who were also friends or acquaintances ; and some of these were connected with "leading journals," or could easily, in virtue of their own eminence, obtain admission for articles of their writing into such papers. The names of five who are still living occur to me at once—Messrs. Swinburne, Morris, Skelton, Colvin, and Knight. I will not insult any one of these gentlemen by raising an express question whether he was "got" by Rossetti to write an article—in any sense which can, in this connexion, be reasonably attached to that word "got." My firm belief is that most or all of them volunteered—and volunteered, not just because they liked Rossetti personally (Mr. Skelton had only a slight knowledge of him), but because their critical judgment avouched his poems to be good. And I know as a fact that Mr. Swinburne's splendid outburst of generous yet sincere eulogy contained at first some passages which, while laudatory of my brother, might be considered unwelcome to some other writers, and that it was my brother who, by not a little pressure, "got" him to retrench these. It is not all critics who think, with Mr. Scott, that the mass of Rossetti's earlier poems, except *Jenny* and *Sister Helen*, are "comparatively boyish and worthless."

Mr. Scott, in a very friendly tone as regards myself, next proceeds to quote some words of mine, which (as he puts it) I "said," but I fancy that in fact I *wrote* them, in the year 1872. I abide by them to the letter ; but I do not repeat them here, as I have no wish to thrust myself constantly forward, and what I said or wrote to Scott appears, more precisely defined, in the note already given from my Diary. Then, after speaking of Rossetti's sensitiveness to adverse criticism when ultimately it came, Mr. Scott says :—

"He had felt that such would be the effect of adverse strictures, and feared them ; else why the reluctance to publish, the desire to issue his privately-printed volume when we had prevailed upon him to take up poetry again, and why the disagreeable expenditure of energy in working the oracle, to furnish all the ordinary channels of criticism with articles ready-made under his own eye ? "

These questions seem a little captious. We have already seen that "the reluctance to publish" arose from the fact that, prior to the exhuming of the MS., Rossetti was not in possession of some poems at all, nor of the final and best form of other poems, and that, immediately after the exhuming, he set about publishing; also that "his privately-printed volume" was prepared with a view quite as much to eventual publication as to merely private issue. We have also seen how far it was "we"—*i.e.*, Mr. Scott, Miss Boyd, and Miss Losh—who "had prevailed upon him to take up poetry again." The phrase "articles ready-made *under his own eye*" can only be termed erroneous (unless we were to substitute a stronger expression). An article ready-made under his own eye must mean an article which Rossetti regulated, controlled and more or less dictated. Whether those articles really were so concocted is a question which some eminent living men could answer if they deigned to do so.

I will sum up by saying: The articles were written by competent men (some of them about the most competent in the country) who considered the critical opinions expressed in them to be true; Rossetti was not part and parcel in the writing of them; they were published under the ordinary conditions governing critical reviews. But it would have been all the better if Rossetti had not cared and had not known who was writing or not writing, or who was publishing or not publishing.

This matter of the critiques which were printed belongs properly to a date after the poems themselves had been published; but I have dealt with it here because some steps with regard to the critiques had been taken in anticipation, and it seemed very requisite to discuss whether those steps were underhand or aboveboard. I now go on to some particulars about Rossetti's health and his friends.

In speaking of my brother's first visit to Penkill Castle in the autumn of 1868, Mr. Scott observes:—

"He never got up till near mid-day; my difficulty every evening being to leave him after we had emptied endless tumblers of the wine of the country in the shape of whisky-toddy."

"Endless tumblers" is, as the newspaper men say, "a large order"; but, giving a reasonable interpretation to the term, I suppose Mr. Scott's statement to be correct. The fact is that my brother was, by nature and habit, one of the most temperate of mortals. He from the first disliked beer, and drank it hardly at all; spirits he drank very little, and I dare say a month or two would often pass without his so much as touching them; wine he liked well, and would drink in moderation on and off, as the occasion happened. He had not a bad head for drinking, and could dispose of a fair ordinary quantity of liquor without its affecting him in any degree whatever. I know that at Penkill he found some whisky which he relished; he would speak of it under the name of the local purveyor, McKechnie. I think it probable that from this time forward a certain increase in the readiness to drink was perceptible in him. In 1869, after returning to London, troubled by profuse perspirations and by nervous symptoms—as well as by weakness of sight, which again interrupted his painting at times—he consulted Sir William Jenner, who prohibited spirits and opiates altogether, and ordered bedtime not later than midnight, and a country-life with but little work for a half-year to come. Rossetti wrote to Mr. Shields as to this on 24 December, saying that doctors

"speak most warningly as to hours, exercise, and abstinence from spirits—for which, Heaven knows, I have no taste, but had, for a year and a half past, fallen into the constant habit of resorting to them at night to secure sleep. I have now relinquished them entirely."

In June 1869 Rossetti lost a very friendly acquaintance, always glad to do him a good turn—Mr. Michael Halliday, who was a Clerk in the House of Lords, and also a painter; at first an amateur painter, but after a while almost professional. He died immediately after attending the funeral of a brother-in-law. He was a well-dressed small man, very manly in his ways—with high shoulders not much unlike a hump. Soon before this, December 1868, my brother had

made the acquaintance of Mr. Nettleship, well known now as a painter of wild animals. He was then a young man, but rather beyond the usual age for starting in the pictorial career; a great enthusiast for ideal and abstract forms of art, such as that of William Blake, and a hardy inventor in the like line. In October 1869 Dr. Thomas Gordon Hake appeared in my brother's studio. In Section X. I have made a brief reference to a romance published anonymously by this gentleman, named *Vates*, much beloved by Rossetti towards 1844. Its full title is *Vates, or The Philosophy of Madness*; or, in a later issue, *Valdarno, or The Ordeal of Art-worship*. It appeared as a serial publication of large size, with strange wild etchings by Thomas Landseer, very stimulating to a boy's imagination. *Vates* seethed in my brother's head, and towards 1860 he took some steps for ferreting out the author; learning that his name was Hake, and writing to him, but without any prompt result, as the Doctor was then abroad. At last however they met, and Rossetti found his visitor to be a poet as well as romancist. This was in October 1869 (Dr. Hake, in his *Memoirs of Eighty Years*, has inadvertently given the date as 1871). The Doctor was then sixty years of age—a man of more than common height, lithe and straight, with very self-possessed gentle manners, and clear deliberate utterance. My brother took to him at once, and cultivated his company; and soon he had reason to know him for a real friend. Rossetti found Dr. Hake's poems singular, but very interesting and to a large extent excellent. Only a few specimens had been published at the date of the meeting in 1869.

Dr. Hake had attained a great age when—quite recently, in January 1895—his life came to a close. His *Memoirs* contain several details about Rossetti—often eulogistic, but not monotonously nor uncandidly so. I will extract a few sentences—proper to this opening period of their acquaintance:—

“When I saw Rossetti in his prime, a healthy man, he was the noblest of men, and had a heart so good that I have never known a

better—seldom its equal. . . . He had a very just mind. When an author was discussed, whatever might be said against him, he would insist on his merits being remembered. From rivalry and its jealousies he was absolutely free, and his hospitality was without limit. Above all, he was ready at all times to serve a friend, and to exert his influence to that end.”

Another person who saw a great deal of Rossetti, beginning towards 1869, was Franz Hueffer, Ph.D., a German from Münster who talked excellent English—a man of learning and great talent, equally accomplished at the pianoforte and at Schopenhauer. He was a prominent leader in the Wagnerian movement, and became musical critic of the *Times*. In 1872 he married Madox Brown’s younger daughter, Cathy. He edited the Tauchnitz issue of Rossetti’s poetical writings, and died rather suddenly in January 1889, aged only forty-three; a severe loss to some musical and literary causes, and to all persons who were closely connected with him.

### XXXI.

#### *ART-WORK FROM 1869 TO SUMMER 1872.*

My brother’s principal works of art of this period were the oil-pictures of *Pandora*, *Mariana*, *Dante’s Dream*, *Water-willow*, *Beata Beatrix* (duplicate), and *Veronica Veronese*; the water-colour of *Michael Scott*; and the designs of *Penelope*, *The Death of Lady Macbeth*, *Silence*, *La Donna della Fiamma*, and *Dr. Hake*. Of some of these works I have already spoken briefly in Section XXVII., in reference to the question of my brother’s types of feminine beauty. A few further observations will now be apposite.

The *Mariana* represents Shakespear’s Mariana in the Moated Grange, with the Page singing to her the song “Take oh take those lips away.” It was originally schemed as simply a portrait of Mrs. Morris, with an idea of music annexed to it. This was to have been supplied by introducing a nightingale, to which the lady was listening.

Gradually the conception of the picture was modified or expanded, and it assumed its present shape, the head of the Page being painted from William Graham, the son of the purchaser. *Dante's Dream*, now in the Walker Art Gallery of Liverpool, was also executed for Mr. Graham, and is much the largest painting that Rossetti ever produced. Its price was £1,575. Mr. Graham only wanted a picture of the size of 6 feet by 3½, his house in Grosvenor Place not containing available spaces adapted to works of a really great size ; but Rossetti was bent upon doing a *magnum opus*, and he set-to upon a canvas fully 10 feet by 7. As in so many another case, he had his way, the purchaser being truly friendly and admiring, and, spite of not a little well-grounded demur, submissive. My brother had an abortive idea about this picture, which is worth recording in his own terms, as contained in a letter to Mr. Scott :—

“I should like to try and lithograph myself that big picture of mine. If one could do something of this sort with one's inventions (much the best quality I have as a painter), one might really get one's brain into print before one died, like Albert Durer, and moreover be freed perhaps from slavery to ‘patrons’ while one lived.”

The inconvenience which Mr. Graham had foreseen ensued as of necessity. The picture, begun in 1869 and finished towards the close of 1871, could only be hung on a staircase. Afterwards it was transferred, through the painter's own hands, from Mr. Graham to Mr. Valpy. The latter gentleman after a while quitted London, settling in Bath. Rossetti, who could not bear the notion that this important example of his art should be hidden away in a country-town, took it back ; and, after a rather tedious delay, succeeded in disposing of it to the Corporation of Liverpool in 1881. In anticipation of this sale he again, with his constant desire to do the very best for his art and his purchasers, worked upon the picture. In some respects he certainly improved it ; but I cannot help thinking that he made a serious mistake

in altering the colour of Beatrice's hair, from the very dark tint proper to the sitter, Mrs. Morris, to a golden hue, which is besides not wholly exempt from a pinkish tendency. Far be it from me however to undervalue, in essential respects, a picture which may be fairly, and not by a brother alone, called great as well as large. The Queen's Limner in Scotland, Sir Joseph Noel Paton, is probably quite as competent to estimate a painting as the majority of press-critics. His opinion of *Dante's Dream* (which he saw in Rossetti's studio in 1881 shortly before its being dispatched to Liverpool) is expressed in a letter addressed to Mr. William Sharp, which contains, among other enthusiastic utterances, the following : " Fifty years hence it will be named among the half-dozen supreme pictures of the world." This praise may be somewhat excessive ; it is at any rate delightfully generous.

The duplicate of *Beata Beatrix* was undertaken for Mr. Graham, who delighted in the original to a singular degree. Rossetti felt the greatest reluctance for this effort—chiefly, as may well be surmised, on account of the painful associations of the work with his dead wife. However, he yielded, and proceeded with the duplicate at intervals, highly dissatisfied with it in all respects. It was made to differ from the first version by the addition of a predella, was completed late in 1872, and was at last viewed by its author with less disfavour than at most stages of its progress. *Veronica Veronese* (an imaginary lady, touching a violin to the note lilted by a canary) embodies, to my mind, some of his more abstract ideas as to the relation between Nature and Art. It might also seem that he put the subject into this form after he had transmuted the old nightingale-subject into a *Mariana*. The *Veronica* was sent to a London exhibition in 1894, and was then received with loud acclaim as a work of exceptional beauty—which indeed it is.

As to the water-colour of *Michael Scott*, I cannot recollect ever seeing any such coloured work ; but I believe there was one, the property either of Mr. Leyland or of Mr. Frederick

Craven of Manchester, who owned several of Rossetti's pictures. I used to be very familiar with a cartoon-design named *The Wooing of Michael Scott*, which my brother intended to paint. It was one of his most fantastic, and in a sense one of his most arbitrary, inventions.

The designs of *Penelope* and of *Silence* rank high among the works in tinted crayons. Both the *Silence* and the *Donna della Fiamma* are from Mrs. Morris. The Portrait of Dr. Hake, done in the same medium, may count as the best male portrait ever produced by Rossetti, if one excepts—and I incline to do so—a head of Mr. Theodore Watts, executed in 1874. It has been lately stated—and, as it happens, by Mr. Watts—that the expression given to Dr. Hake is too heavy. It never struck me to that effect, but there has been a lapse of several years since I saw the portrait.

In January 1872 Rossetti first came into correspondence with Mr. W. A. Turner of Manchester, who later on became the purchaser of some of his pictures—*A Vision of Fiammetta*, a *Proserpine*, etc. Their relations were always very cordial. The *Vision of Fiammetta* is not to be confounded with a head named *Fiammetta* which Rossetti had ere now sold to Mr. Gambart. This was in fact the head of "Kate the Queen," excised from the large canvas on which a picture from Browning had been begun towards 1850.

## XXXII.

### THE POEMS, 1870—CHLORAL—KELMSCOTT MANOR-HOUSE.

TOWARDS the close of 1869 and beginning of 1870, Rossetti's attention was chiefly concentrated upon his forthcoming poetic volume—the one which is known as *Poems*, 1870. This date, 1870, should be borne in mind by any amateurs of Rossetti's work; for the volume named *Poems* of 1881, though partly a re-issue of the book of 1870, is very far from being identical with it. At a recent date, 1894, I found that even the

authorities of the British Museum Library had allowed this fact to slip their observation, and were not in possession of any copy of the *Poems*, 1881, having assumed it to be a mere reprint of the volume of 1870; and thus one of the author's longest compositions, the (unfinished) *Bride's Prelude*, did not then exist in that Library in any form printed during his lifetime—not to speak of other and far from unimportant alterations.

My brother's health continued to be not good, and his eyesight bad; and in the spring of 1870 he went down to an estate belonging to his kind friend of old standing, Mrs. Bodichon, who placed it quite at his disposal for a while—Scalands, near Robertsbridge, Sussex. Here, after a period of much depression, he at last revived considerably; and, when he came back to town in May, I found him much thinner than he had been for years (which was a decided advantage), and also much better. By March 1871 he was easier, as to both health and eyes, than for some years preceding.

At Scalands Rossetti was joined by an American acquaintance of his, a friend more especially of my own—Mr. William J. Stillman, who not very long afterwards married Miss Spartali. Mr. Stillman was originally a landscape-painter, then a literary man and journalist; and lately he had been American Consul in Crete, during the vigorous insurrection of that island against Turkish oppression. He openly sided with the Cretans; and, after suffering there many troubles and a great domestic calamity, settled in London in the autumn of 1869. He has now, for several years past, been domiciled in Rome, holding a very important post in journalism. Few men could have been better adapted than Mr. Stillman—none could have been more willing—to solace Rossetti in his harasses from insomnia and other troubles; but it is a fact that a remedy worse than the disease was the result of his friendly ministrations. Chloral, as a soporific, was then a novelty. In England little was known of it, and not much elsewhere. It was supposed to produce no ill effects worth taking into consideration. Mr. Stillman had

heard of its potency in procuring sleep—possibly he had himself tested this—and he introduced the drug to Rossetti's attention. My brother was one of the men least fitted to try any such experiment with impunity. With him it was a case of any expedient and any risk to escape a present evil; and sleeplessness was no doubt, to such a temperament as his, an evil of prime magnitude. He began, I understand, with nightly doses of chloral of 10 grains. In course of time it got to 180 grains! So at least Rossetti supposed; but I have sound reason for thinking, with much thankfulness, that in this he was greatly mistaken. His doctor, Mr. Marshall—knowing with whom he had to deal—would not, save in some instances of crisis, prohibit the drug altogether, but he took care that the chemists should dilute it to a degree of which my brother was kept severely in ignorance; and, when he fancied that his dose was 180 grains, I dare say it was barely half of this, or maybe barely a third. Even after the chloral entered his house elaborate and clandestine precautions of further dilution were taken by Mr. Dunn, Mr. George Hake, and others. It is rather surprising to me that my brother never found this out; for, with all his extreme carelessness in many matters of daily routine, he was observant, and grew to be suspicious—the outcome, I believe, to a very large extent, of the chloral itself. Notwithstanding all this dilution, the dosing with chloral remained not less monstrous than the effects of it were deplorable. “I am told” (says Mr. Edmund Gosse) “that no case has been recorded in the annals of medicine in which one patient has taken so much, or even half so much, chloral as Rossetti took.” I am fain to hope that this estimate applies, not to the real doses taken, but to the nominal doses as supposed by Rossetti himself. “Deep melancholy and weakness of will” are set down as two of the detrimental results of chloral. Too surely my brother did become at times deeply melancholy, and his will—naturally so strong, prompt, and indeed overbearing—did get enfeebled—I may say, chronically enfeebled; though there were many intervals

and many contingencies when it reasserted itself in its olden vigour.

Even the chloral was not the whole of the harm done. My brother found it nauseous, and after a while not so efficacious as he wanted. Therefore, strictly as he had been warned by the best medical advice against any tampering with spirits, he took to drams of neat whisky in immediate sequence to the chloral ; not, I think—unless in the most exceptional instances—at any other period in the twenty-four hours. I regret to say that I have more than once seen him take his dose of chloral, and then forthwith toss down his throat a brimming wineglass of the neat whisky, which was gone almost in a gulp. Remonstrance was imperative, and also futile. I have often surmised that this misuse of spirits was at least as noxious to him as the chloral itself. But, while he was at Scalands, and for some months ensuing, things had no doubt not come to this pass.

Whatever may have been the evil they wrought in him, my brother had good reason for believing in the chloral, supplemented by the alcohol, as an opiate. Yet he would not admit that they afforded him real natural sleep. Many a time have I heard him declare that the so-called sleep could only be called a trance. It gave unconsciousness, without adequate repose and refreshment. Still, the drug counteracted insomnia ; and who shall say what his condition would have been if insomnia had persisted with him from week to week and from month to month, totally uncounteracted ? How long would his brain—how long would his life—have continued to struggle on ?

The volume of *Poems* was published on 25 April 1870, or thereabouts. Some advance copies had been sent to leading reviews, so that there might be no delay in an expression of opinion. The book was a great success. The first issue consisted of a thousand copies ; of these, eight hundred were sold by 3 May, and the remainder about the 20th. Two hundred and fifty out of the thousand went to America. The profit to the author was to be a quarter of the published price,

paid as soon as the copies were put on sale, without waiting for actual purchase ; and by the end of July Rossetti had thus realized £450. This rate of sale could not, in the nature of things, last very long, and two events brought it to an early conclusion—although later issues of the book (there were six in all) continued going off for some while later. Dickens died on 9 June, and the sale declined. France declared war on Prussia in the middle of the summer, and the sale almost ceased. These occurrences seemed to be, and probably were, in the nature of cause and effect. Such are the odd and extraneous chances affecting a book about *Dante at Verona*, *The Blessed Damozel*, and *The House of Life*. A Tauchnitz edition of the volume came out in 1873, with a preface by Hueffer.

The chorus of praise for the *Poems* was eager, loud, and prolonged ; and certainly any steps which Rossetti may have taken for “working the oracle” (to recur to Mr. Scott’s favourite phrase) were not wholly responsible for this—far from it. Mr. Swinburne led the van with what may well be called a pæan in the *Fortnightly Review*. Now Mr. Swinburne is tolerably well known for three qualities : 1, supreme competence for expressing an opinion on poetic art in general, and on particular poems ; 2, gorgeous munificence of praise where he sees it to be due ; and 3, rigorous silence as to what he deems below the requisite standard, or on occasion resolute denunciation of it. I will extract two passages from his verdict upon Rossetti :—

“It [Rossetti’s poetry] has the fullest fervour and fluency of impulse, and the impulse is always towards harmony and perfection. It has the inimitable note of instinct, and the instinct is always high and right. What he would do is always what a poet should, and what he would do is always done.”

And next upon some matters of detail :—

“The influence which plainly has passed over the writer’s mind, attracting it as by a charm of sound or vision, by spell of colour or of dream, towards the Christian forms and images, is in the main

an influence from the mythologic side of the creed. Alone among the higher artists of his age, Mr. Rossetti has felt and given the mere physical charm of Christianity with no admixture of doctrine or of doubt. . . . [And then as to poems in the old-ballad form, such as Rossetti's *Stratton Water*] On this ground Mr. Morris has a firmer tread than the great artist by the light of whose genius and kindly guidance he put forth the firstfruits of his work, as I did afterwards."

Mr. Colvin spoke of "personal passion" as a leading element in Rossetti's poetry. Mr. Buxton Forman held him to be remarkable for transfusing Italian blood into a newly opened vein of English verse. I could extend my list of writers and their encomiums very largely, were I minded to do so ; but will content myself with observing that no critique afforded the author more marked satisfaction than one which, after a lengthened interval, appeared in an American paper, *The Catholic World*. This naturally dealt more especially with Rossetti's poems in their relation to Christian or Catholic ideals, and was regarded by my brother as singularly discerning, on the part of a total stranger. One or other name was suggested to him as that of the probable author, but he did not succeed in obtaining any positive knowledge as to this point. The article is now ascribed to Mr. J. J. Earle.

Among those who wrote letters to him in a laudatory strain were Tennyson, Sir Henry Taylor, Dr. Marston (who also published a review), Mrs. Lewes, Browning, George Meredith, Sir Theodore Martin, Mr. Frank A. Marshall, Munro, Charles Wells (of *Joseph and his Brethren*), Professor Charles Eliot Norton, Miss Spartali, and Mrs. Gilchrist.

In those early days of publication there was, I believe, only one review of a more or less distinctly unfavourable kind—that in *Blackwood's Magazine*. I forgot what was said in it, or possibly never knew. I will not suggest that the publishers or conductors of this magazine were sore because (as previously mentioned) Rossetti had not closed with their offer of producing the volume ; but one may safely surmise that, had that offer been accepted, the tone of the critique

would have been different. My brother was not so absolutely thin-skinned about reviews as some people have supposed and proclaimed—although it is too true that in one instance, to be hereafter commented on, he took the matter to heart in a most exaggerated and unreasonable degree. When the *Blackwood* critique appeared, he wrote to his friend Shields (August 1870) that he was surprised “to find such things producing a much more transient and momentary impression of unpleasantness than he would have expected—indeed he might almost say none at all.” Of course, in the real essence of the matter, he was always and in all relations quite indifferent to criticism, knowing well for himself what he could do, and the worth of it, and what he could not do. But this did not exempt him from being sensitive on the score of personal attack, or in view of the effect which adverse notices might produce upon the minds of others.

The great success attending the *Poems* induced my brother to think at once of re-publishing his *Early Italian Poets*. This scheme was in his head as soon as May 1870, but the re-publication did not actually ensue till 1873, when the book came out, through Mr. Ellis, with a change in the order of its contents, and an altered name, *Dante and his Circle*. He preferred now to give the first prominence to Alighieri, and to relegate the preceding poets to a secondary position in the volume. Mr. Ellis issued the book at his own cost, and halved with Rossetti such profits as accrued.

Before the end of May 1871 Mr. William Morris for himself and his family, and Rossetti on his own behalf, were intending to rent a house in the country—Kelmscott Manor-house in Oxfordshire. The nearest town was Lechlade in Gloucestershire, famous through an early poem by Shelley. The nearest having tolerable resources in the way of provisions etc. was Farrington in Berkshire. The rent was only £75. Here Rossetti stayed for many weeks, beginning towards the middle of July 1871. There are in the Family-letters several details about this picturesque and pleasurable old house, and my brother's vivid enjoyment of it; and I need not enlarge upon

the subject here. The building appears painted in the background of his small picture entitled *Water-willow*. Dr. Hake gives a few descriptive particulars :—

“It is an old place, with its seven, or rather twelve, gables—such a sample of antiquity as you don’t meet with often. The windows are square casements with stone mullions, and the walls very thick. The garden has its yew-tree hedges, cut into fantastic shapes. The river is flooded like a lake, so that old Thames don’t know itself again. It is a most primitive village that surrounds the place—a few scattered freestone habitations, some ivy-covered. There are no neighbours to interfere with the liberty of the subject.”

In my brother’s letters to Scott there are amusing references to a storied tapestry, one of the old-world house-properties at Kelmscott. I combine passages from two different letters :—

“The subject of the tapestries is the history of Samson, which is carried through with that uncompromising uncomfortableness peculiar to this class of art-manufacture. Indeed I have come to the conclusion that a tapestried room should always be much dimmer than this one. These things, constantly obtruded on one in a bright light, become a persecution. . . . I am getting used a little now to the tapestry ; though still the questions—Why a Philistine leader should have a panther’s tail, or Delilah a spike sticking out of her head, or what Samson, standing over a heap of slain, has done with the ass’s jawbone—will obtrude themselves at times between more abstract speculations.”

I have already had occasion to mention Mr. Sidney Colvin and Dr. Westland Marston in connexion with my brother’s *Poems*. He saw about this time a good deal of both these gentlemen, and also of Mr. Marston’s family, including his blind poet-son Philip Bourke Marston, whose natural gift Rossetti accounted genuine, and his attainment in the poetic art, considering his mournful privation, a matter for fervent praise, and even astonishment. Another friendly acquaintance was Mr. Gosse, who first met Rossetti towards Christmas 1870 ; and in 1871 the great Russian novelist Turgenieff was introduced to the Cheyne Walk house by Mr. William

Ralston, and he dined there once or twice, preserving a very pleasant recollection of his visits. Mr. Gosse's opinion of my brother has been expressed in print in the handsomest terms :—

“He was the most prompt in suggestion, the most regal in giving, the most sympathetic in response, of the men I have known or seen ; and this without a single touch of the prophetic manner, the air of such professional seers as Coleridge or Carlyle.”

Still more impulsive and indeed quaint in his enthusiasm was Philip Marston, who in 1873 wrote thus in a private letter to his youthful friend Oliver Madox Brown :—

“What a supreme man is Rossetti ! Why is he not some great exiled king, that we might give our lives in trying to restore him to his kingdom ?”

At Kelmscott Rossetti wrote a large amount of new poetry : *Cloud Confines* (which he termed “my very best thing”), *Down Stream* (first called *The River's Record*, which was written in a punt on the Thames), the beginning of *Soothsay* (originally entitled *Commandments*), some thirty fresh sonnets for *The House of Life*, *Sunset Wings*, and *Rose Mary*, which was finished towards 13 September 1871. He began by writing a prose synopsis of this poem, which did not as yet contain the *Beryl-songs*. These had better not have been added, and so he himself thought eventually. The *Cloud Confines*, and also the old prose story of *Hand and Soul*, were published in the *Fortnightly Review*. There was also a grotesque ballad about Mr. Robert Buchanan, consequent upon the review-article to be next mentioned. This slumbers in manuscript.

### XXXIII.

#### THE FLESHLY SCHOOL OF POETRY.

IN the *Contemporary Review* for October 1871 an article appeared entitled *The Fleshly School of Poetry—Mr. D. G.*

*Rossetti*—and signed Thomas Maitland. For the purpose of this article Thomas Maitland was non-existent, and the real author was the verse-writer—or let us say the poet—Robert Buchanan. Some skirmishing in the press rapidly ensued, not free from confusion and self-conflicting. Its main upshot was this—that Mr. Buchanan had intended to write an anonymous attack upon Rossetti, and the publisher of the *Contemporary Review* turned it into a pseudonymous attack. One poet who assails another anonymously, in a magazine where anonymity is in no degree the rule, does not occupy a very graceful position; and the publisher who pseudonymizes his anonymous and aggressive contributor occupies, I apprehend, an ungraceful position. I have very positive grounds for affirming (and I will produce them if wanted) that Mr. Buchanan was from the first strongly urged, and this by a person who had every right to intervene, not to be anonymous, and *à fortiori* not pseudonymous. I shall not repeat—what was said in some papers at the time—that there was plain mendacity in some of the explanations offered. But it seems to behove me to say a little about the antecedents of *The Fleshly School of Poetry*—*Mr. D. G. Rossetti*, and to take to myself any blame which may properly or plausibly belong to me; for I have more than once been told by friends that the animus against my brother, apparent in the article of Mr. Robert-Thomas Buchanan-Maitland, should be regarded as a vicarious expression of resentment at something which I myself had written. Thus then.

Mr. Swinburne's volume of *Poems and Ballads* having excited a flutter in 1866, a burlesque poem appeared in the *Spectator* for 15 September 1866, named *The Session of the Poets*. It was anonymous; but rumour—since then confirmed by himself—ascribed it to Mr. Buchanan. It contained the following lines:—

“Up jumped, with his neck stretching out like a gander,  
 Master Swinburne, and squealed, glaring out through his hair,  
 ‘All virtue is bosh! Hallelujah for Landor!  
 I disbelieve wholly in everything! There!’

“ With language so awful he dared then to treat ‘em,  
 Miss Ingelow fainted in Tennyson’s arms ;  
 Poor Arnold rushed out, crying ‘ Sæcl’ inficetum !’  
 And great bards and small bards were full of alarms :  
 Till Tennyson, flaming and red as a gipsy,  
 Struck his fist on the table, and uttered a shout :  
 ‘ To the door with the boy ! Call a cab ! he is tipsy !’  
 And they carried the naughty young gentleman out.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Then ‘ Ah !’ cried the Chairman, ‘ this teaches me knowledge :  
 The future shall find me more wise, by the Powers !  
 This comes of assigning to youngers from college  
 Too early a place in such meetings as ours.’ ”

About the same time I was writing for an American quarterly a review of Mr. Swinburne’s poems. It was eventually published, not in America, but as a brochure in England, under the name of *Swinburne’s Poems and Ballads, a Criticism*, by William Michael Rossetti, 1866. Bearing in mind Mr. Buchanan’s—as I thought it—gratuitous and insolent attack upon a poet already so illustrious as Mr. Swinburne, and entertaining the opinion that much more than commensurate laudation had been bestowed by reviews upon the volume (or volumes) of verse which Mr. Buchanan had up to that time published, I opened my *Criticism* with the following sentence :—

“ The advent of a new great poet is sure to cause a commotion of one kind or another ; and it would be hard were this otherwise in times like ours, when the advent of even so poor and pretentious a poetaster as a Robert Buchanan stirs storms in teapots.”

When my first edition of Shelley appeared in 1870 it was severely condemned in the *Athenæum*, in a criticism which I was informed was written by Mr. Buchanan. Whether this is correct I cannot affirm. At any rate, Mr. Buchanan considered that to be “ the worst edition of Shelley which has ever seen the light,” for so he has told us in *The Fleshly School of Poetry*, adding one or two other partially relevant “ digs ” at me. Somewhat later in 1870 than the *Athenæum* article

my brother's volume of *Poems* came out. It remained uncriticized by Mr. Buchanan (so far as I am aware) until October 1871, when the article in the *Contemporary Review* appeared.

This article was (to use no other expression) severe against Rossetti. It was afterwards considerably enlarged, and its severity, direct and implied, was increased, and it was reissued as a pamphlet-volume of about 100 pages—*The Fleshly School of Poetry, and other Phenomena of the Day, by Robert Buchanan* (Strahan & Co., 1872). I will give some extracts, showing what opinion Mr. Buchanan entertained of Rossetti's performances. These extracts come direct from the pamphlet, and are (practically speaking) verbatim; but it should be understood that the "Thomas Maitland" article was in full general conformity with them.

The *Poems* (we are told) exhibit morbid deviation from healthy forms of life. Nothing is virile, nothing tender, nothing completely sane. There is thorough nastiness in many pieces. A sickening desire is evinced to reproduce the sensual mood. Rossetti has not given us one rounded and noteworthy piece of art. He is fleshly all over, from the roots of his hair to the tips of his toes. There is bad blood in all the poems, and breadth of poetic interest in none. Bad rhymes become the rule, and not the exception. The burden of *Sister Helen* is repeated with little or no alteration through thirty-four verses (as a fact, it is repeated with invariable and essential alteration, and Mr. Buchanan misquotes its close "between Hell and Heaven," changing this into "between Heaven and Hell," and so spoiling the cadence). *Sister Helen* and *Eden Bower* are affected rubbish. *The House of Life* is a very hotbed of nasty phrases. Sonnets 11 to 20 are one profuse sweat of animalism. Sonnets 29, 30, and 31, are very, very silly.<sup>1</sup> The *Last Confession* positively reeks of morbid

<sup>1</sup> The thirteen Sonnets thus characterized are the following: *The Birth-Bond* (Have you not noted in some family); *A Day of Love* (Those envied places which do know her well); *Love Sweetness* (Sweet dimness of her loosened hair's downfall); *Love's Baubles* (I stood where

lust. In Rossetti's poetry there is a veritably stupendous preponderance of sensuality and sickly animalism. He and Mr. Swinburne merely echo what is vile. I see in Rossetti no gleam of Nature, not a sign of humanity. [On a passage from *The Portrait*] Was ever writing so formally slovenly and laboriously limp? [Then, in general] Treatment, down to the tiniest detail, frivolous, absurd, and reckless. As shapeless and undigested as chaos itself.

On such abuse as this, wholesale and retail, I will not express any view of my own, nor solicit the verdict of the reader. About twenty-four years have elapsed since Mr. Buchanan wrote. If public opinion in that interval has ratified, or gone near to ratifying, his dicta, I remain under a mistake. If public opinion at the present date should avouch that the man who could thus express himself must have had in view some object extraneous to the fair and moderate expression of a candid conviction, I should be far from astonished.

According to my recollection of the facts—of which I had adequate personal knowledge at the time—my brother was but little troubled, and not downcast at all, by the article such as it appeared in the *Contemporary Review*. He had all along expected that some one or other would make a point of assailing him. He knew himself to be above such an assault as was now delivered, and felt moreover that the fact of the pseudonym, and the ambiguities which had accompanied it, gave him a considerable advantage as a defendant. Mr. Scott—with an inaccuracy as to date which is very habitual to him—relates how, “as midsummer 1872 was drawing on,” he gave a dinner-party which Rossetti attended; and how

Love in brimming armfuls bore); *Winged Hours* (Each hour until we meet is as a bird); *Life in Love* (Not in thy body is thy life at all); *The Love-Moon* (When that dead face bowered in the furthest years); *The Morrow's Message* (Thou Ghost, I said, and is thy name To-day?); *Sleepless Dreams* (Girt in dark growths yet glimmering with one star); *Secret Parting* (Because our talk was of the cloud-control); *Inclusiveness* (The changing guests each in a different mood); *Known in Vain* (As two whose love, first foolish, widening scope); *The Landmark* (Was that the landmark? what, the foolish well).

the latter shouted out the name of Robert Buchanan, whom "he had discovered to be the writer of the article," and how "from this time he occupied himself in composing a long reply." It is certain (as one of the Family-letters shows) that my brother had been informed about Mr. Buchanan towards the middle of October 1871, and that soon after that time he undertook a reply for publication. Mr. Scott's date is therefore quite erroneous. To his other statements I raise no demur, but he seems to think the whole incident more noteworthy than I can. My brother was impulsive and outspoken; and, being (it is to be supposed) among friends well known to him, and known to be on his side of any such controversy, he may very likely—and very harmlessly—have been a trifle more vociferous than those drawing-room and dining-room manners for which Dickens gave the formula of "prunes and prisms" would dictate.

It is certainly true that he set-to at writing a reply to Mr. Buchanan—a fact which is in no wise inconsistent with what I have just been saying about his comparative coolness under the *Contemporary* attack. He was vehemently, not to say virulently, assailed; and this more on the ground of imputed moral obliquity than of poetic or literary shortcomings. To be ridiculed was what he did not like; to be vilified as writing from impure motives and as an incentive to public impurity was what he disliked extremely. It would have been much better—and I told him so at the time—to take no part in the controversy, and to allow the anonymo-pseudonymous attack to die out of itself, leaving perhaps little general memory of its unsavoury existence, and little warning to any one except the parties directly concerned; who would probably have found out that a "poet" who abuses another poet under the shield of anonymity had better not be loaded, by himself or another, with the thicker shield of pseudonymity. However, my brother did not adopt my well-meant advice. He wrote a pamphlet, and sent the more serious parts of it to the *Athenæum*, where these were printed with his name appended, and under his own title,

*The Stealthy School of Criticism*.<sup>1</sup> To me *The Stealthy School of Criticism* appears a very sound and telling piece of self-vindication. It rectifies some positive mis-statements contained in Mr. Buchanan's article, and sets the whole question in a much more correct light than the latter had succeeded in casting upon it, or perhaps had been minded to supply. The pamphlet itself, including this extracted portion, was put into print, with a view to its being published by Mr. Ellis; but on consideration it was held to be such as might lay the author or the publisher open to an action at law—possibly on the ground, "the greater the truth, the greater the libel"—and it was withheld, and ultimately destroyed. I heard it at the time; but long ago I had quite forgotten its treatment and details—which were assuredly not scurrilous, but I dare say sarcastic and stinging enough, for my brother was the reverse of a bad hand at that sort of thing when he chose to take it up. He was displeased, indignant, and perhaps incensed, and disposed to "give as good as he got"; but still, as I have said, not seriously wounded nor deeply mortified, so far as the *Contemporary* article went. I can even remember that he was frankly amused at some remarks by Mr. Buchanan upon certain rhymes in his volume—such as "wet" rhyming with "Haymarket"; and he thought that Mr. Buchanan had made a very neat travestie of them as follows:—

"When winds do roar and rains do pour,  
Hard is the life of the sailor:  
He scarcely, as he reels, can tell  
The side-lights from the binnacle:  
He looketh on the wild water," etc.

And at a later date, hearing that the anonymously published poem, *St. Abe and his Seven Wives*, was the work of Mr. Buchanan, he told me that he had found it to be a production of considerable force and spirit. He was indeed (and Dr. Hake has told us so), though sufficiently downright in denouncing works which he disrelished, whether in literature or in fine

<sup>1</sup> Naturally, it is included in Rossetti's *Collected Works*.

art, always inclined to say a good word for such points in them as he thought deserving of this.

Mr. Buchanan, having made one envenomed attack upon Rossetti, was not to be appeased until he had made another much more envenomed ; and in the spring of 1872 he issued (as I have said) his pamphlet-volume, being a greatly extended, more systematic, and more denunciatory version of the original review. He here more definitely identified Rossetti, as well as some other poets, with a supposed movement for the propagation of whatsoever is most foul in vice, and most disgusting in vicious display. Possibly this production, like its predecessor, is only very partially remembered by the living generation of readers. The sooner it is totally forgotten, the better for all concerned, and more especially for Mr. Buchanan himself.

I can say this without any unfair bias towards my brother's side. It must likewise be the opinion of Mr. Buchanan, for whose feelings in the matter it is not my business to entertain or express any especial concern. At the same time I willingly acknowledge that, when at last he did retract, he retracted straightforwardly, and in a spirit to which my brother might perhaps have openly responded, had he then been less near his grave. Mr. Buchanan, in 1881, dedicated to Rossetti, as to "An Old Enemy," his romance entitled *God and the Man* ; and, besides some other retractation (especially a phrase in *The Academy*, 1 July 1882, "Mr. Rossetti, I freely admit now, never was a Fleshly Poet at all"), he addressed to Mr. Hall Caine, soon after Rossetti's death, a letter containing the following phrases. I only extract some expressions relating to Rossetti : others which show persistent rancour against other people are best left in oblivion :—

"While admitting freely that my article in the *Contemporary Review* was unjust to Rossetti's claims as a poet, I have ever held, and still hold, that it contained nothing to warrant the manner in which it was received by the poet and his circle [the poet's only overt act, it will be remembered, was to write that very moderate self-vindication called *The Stealthy School of Criticism*]. Well, my

protest was received in a way which turned irritation into wrath, wrath into violence. I was unjust, as I have said ; most unjust when I impugned the purity, and misconceived the passion, of writings too hurriedly read, and reviewed *currente calamo* [but several months had elapsed between the publication of the review-article and that of the pamphlet]. I make full admission of Rossetti's claims to the purest kind of literary renown ; and, if I were to criticize his poems *now*, I would write very differently."

There is another phrase which seems to go near to admitting that Mr. Buchanan—in 1871, and also in 1872—abused Rossetti just *because* other critics had praised him :—

"At the time it [the review-article] was written, the newspapers were full of panegyric. Mine was a mere drop of gall in an ocean of *eau sucrée*."

But even this is not quite apposite to the facts. The "newspapers" had had their say about Rossetti's *Poems* towards April and May 1870, whereas Mr. Buchanan's pseudonymous article appeared in October 1871.

Let me sum up briefly the chief stages in this miserable, and in some aspects disgraceful, affair. 1. Mr. Buchanan, whether anonymously or pseudonymously—being a poet, veritable or reputed—attacked another poet, a year and a half after the works of the latter had been received with general and high applause. 2. He attacked him on grounds partly literary, but more prominently moral. 3. After he had had every opportunity for reflection, he repeated the attack in a greatly aggravated form. 4. At a later date he knew that the author in question was not a bad poet, nor a poet with an immoral purpose. The question naturally arises—If he knew this in or before 1881, why did he know or suppose the exact contrary in 1871 and 1872? Here is a question to which no answer (within my cognizance) has ever been given by Mr. Buchanan, and it is one to which some readers may risk their own reply. That is their affair. If Mr. Robert Buchanan concludes that Mr. Thomas Maitland told an untruth, it is not for me to say him nay.

Not long after Rossetti's death an article named *The Art of Rossetti* was written by Mr. Harry Quilter, and it was published in that same *Contemporary Review* which had reviled the man during his lifetime. It is laudatory, but very far from being exclusively so. Some of the observations in this article appear to me to be among the best and most acute which have been spoken on that question of "fleshliness," and I will give them here. I will only premise that, while I regard it as a gross calumny to say that Rossetti was in any marked sense an adherent of any "Fleshly School of Poetry" (if such there was), I do not contest that there are some things in his writings to which a puritan or a purist may, from his own point of view, legitimately take exception. The real question is not whether Rossetti, as a man or as a poet, was "fleshly," but whether certain subjects, and certain modes of treatment and forms of expression, are to be admitted into poetry as a wide domain, or excluded from it as a narrow domain. To this question perhaps the simplest and the most sufficient answer is that all or nearly all the greatest poets, in all countries and ages of the world, have admitted them; and I will go a step further, and (without presuming to rank Dante Rossetti with those greatest poets) will say that very few of them have admitted so little as he did of those subjects, modes of treatment, and forms of expression. I now cite from Mr. Quilter:—

"It was said once, by a writer anxious to make out a case against the Præraphaelite school of modern poetry, that one of the chief characteristics of Rossetti's verse was its sensuality, and certain quotations were given to prove this. Time has effectually disposed of that charge, and the misrepresentations on which it was founded have been adequately confuted; but it has hardly been sufficiently noticed that the real ground of the accusation is due to the fact of the poet-painter being unable to dis sever his pictorial from his poetic faculty. He habitually thought (if such an expression is allowable) in terms of painting. He could not dis sever his most purely intellectual ideas from colour and form; and it is the intrusion of these physical facts into his poetry, in places where they are

unexpected and unnecessary, that gives, to hasty readers and superficial critics, such a wrong impression. And, in the same way as he charges a poem with more colour and form than it can well bear with reference to its special subject, so does he charge his pictures with a weight of idea which their form and colour scarcely realize; and in both he calls upon the spectator to be at once the witness and the interpreter of his work. From this there results in his poetry the following effect—that he is at his finest when he has to tell some plain story, or exemplify some comparatively simple thought, the insertion into which of physical facts will heighten the meaning rather than jar upon it; or in verses which treat intellectual ideas from a purely sensuous basis, such for instance as in those sonnets which are concerned with the passion of love. When however he seeks to treat either a purely intellectual or a purely spiritual subject, he fails almost inevitably, and that apparently in painting as well as in poetry. Like Antæus, if he is held off the earth too long his strength fails him. It is this painter-like quality which makes his verse so puzzling; for in idea it is, almost without exception, of a singularly pure and intellectual character. Turn from his verse to his painting, and the same curious contradiction is forced upon our attention. We find continually, in his pictures where the painter's individuality is most manifest, that the reproduction of the sensuous part of his subject is, so to speak, interfered with by the strange, half-refining, half-abstract quality of his intellect. . . . All the other physical peculiarities to be traced in his works are all due to the passionately sensuous but equally passionately intellectual nature of Rossetti. They are the record of a man whose sense of beauty was always being disturbed by his sense of feeling."

## XXXIV.

*HYPOCHONDRIA AND ILLNESS.*

WE have now reached what may be called "the parting of the waters" in Dante Rossetti's life. In earlier years he had had his tribulations: difficulties in his professional career, the ill-health of his loved Lizzie, with ensuing harasses in relation to their engagement, and to their matrimonial life; her early and shocking death, with troublous memories

attending it, and anxieties and self-conflicts ensuing; partial failure of eyesight; insomnia, only combated by perilous palliatives. Still, on the whole, as he stood at the middle of 1871, and even on to the spring of 1872, he was a moderately healthy man, and in many respects a thriving if not exactly a happy one. For happiness some fair measure of contentment is essential; and Rossetti, a man of restless imagination and vehement desires, better satisfied with his surroundings than with himself and his performances, was never contented, and therefore never, in a right sense, happy. His aspirations, though to some extent assuaged, were by no means soothed into serenity; but this I need not say, for no aspirations, properly to be thus called, will be so in the little life which is rounded with a sleep. Nature had endowed him with an ample stock of high-heartedness and high spirits. These served to while the time for his external self and for his friends, while moody distaste, and something like a surging mist of gloom, were often active within. He was a successful man: successful and admired as a painter—necessarily in a small circle, as he would not exhibit; still more successful and acclaimed as a poet, and by a much wider public. Achievement in art and in poetry he had always longed for, for these he had passionately worked; to general recognition he was not indifferent. Fortune had thrown in a more than wonted share of her capricious favours. Loving and beloved by his family, warmly cherished by his friends, acknowledged by his intellectual compeers, sought out by strangers as a man of renown, he seemed to have attained a singularly enviable position. It was indeed one of those positions which Destiny begrudges to men, and determines to reverse.

This was Dante Rossetti viewed from the outside in 1871. "But I have that within which passeth show." Mental trouble and a too active and unappeased imagination had long ago brought on insomnia; insomnia had brought on chloral; chloral had brought on depression, agitation, and a turmoil of fantasies. I think it clear, judging from results,

that my brother—being “put out,” though not gravely perturbed, by the *Contemporary* article, and by the announcement that it would soon be enlarged and re-published separately—must have got even worse sleep than usual, and must have exceeded more than usual in his chloral-dosing and its concomitant of alcohol. Certain it is that, when the pamphlet-edition appeared (which was towards the middle of May 1872), with its greatly enhanced virus of imputation and suggestion, he received it in a spirit very different from that with which he had encountered the review-article, and had confuted it in *The Stealthy School of Criticism*. His fancies now ran away with him, and he thought that the pamphlet was a first symptom in a widespread conspiracy for crushing his fair fame as an artist and a man, and for hounding him out of honest society. Most of his friends, myself included, combated these ideas. I question whether his closest confidant, Madox Brown, did so with adequate energy, for he himself, though reasonable and clear-headed, was of a very suspicious temper in professional matters, and held himself and his immediate circle to be not a little ill-used. My brother's notions were, as I have said, fancies, and fancies bred, not of a temperate consideration of facts, but of the constitutional and mental upset caused by a noxious drug. Still, it is manifest, upon the face of his booklet, that the charges brought forward and reinforced by Mr. Buchanan were by no manner of means light ones. They were sufficient—if believed, which I suppose they very scantily were—to exclude Rossetti from the companionship of virtuous and even of decent people; and it was no fault of this “accuser of sins” (to use Blake's expression) if such a result did not ensue.

I do not remember, and do not wish to remember, all the details about Mr. Buchanan's performances, and their reception by the press. He had of course his supporters—not perhaps extremely numerous. I don't suppose that a single poet of renown was among them. Tennyson (as I have reason to know positively) was one of the first to object to the attack

that it was by no means a fair appraisal of Rossetti, much of whose work he rated extremely high, the sonnets especially. In January 1872, midway between the *Contemporary* article and the pamphlet, there was a critique in the *Quarterly Review* (I have heard it ascribed to Mr. Courthope) which was unfavourable to Rossetti, and more especially to Mr. Morris, less so to Mr. Swinburne. Mr. Hall Caine has spoken of other adverse articles in the *Edinburgh Review* and the *British Quarterly*. Their dates and other details, if ever known to me, have slipped my recollection. I can dimly recall a leading article in the *Echo*, one word in which, "coward" or "cowards," disturbed my brother unduly. This article—possibly without the least reason—has been ascribed to Mr. Buchanan himself. So overstrained was the balance of his mind at the time that my brother seriously consulted me as to whether it might not be his duty to challenge the writer or the editor to a duel. I need hardly record my reply—that duels in this common-sensible country are equally illegal and risible. Mr. Buchanan's own preface to his pamphlet makes use of the same offensive word. After referring to "Mr. Rossetti's defence, and the opinion of Mr. Rossetti's friends," he is pleased to say (and to this also my brother greatly objected)—"I have only one word to use concerning the attacks upon myself. They are the inventions of cowards, too spoilt with flattery to bear criticism, and too querulous and humoursome to perceive the real issues of the case." It does not seem to have occurred to Mr. Buchanan to ponder whether the term "coward" applies more properly to a verse-writer who anonymously (not to say pseudonymously) assails another verse-writer, intermingling questions of morals with those of poetry—or rather to the man who, being thus assailed, defends himself under his own name, or to friends (or it may be outsiders) who, with or without their names, retort on the assailant.

I am sorry to dwell at so much length upon this really contemptible, and by its very author discarded, affair of *The*

*Fleshly School of Poetry*; but, as a biographer, I could not from this point onward tell a word of truth unless I gave it prominence. In my brother's life it was deplorably prominent, though in itself of hardly more importance than some one's bad breath passing across a looking-glass and slurring it for a moment. The whole matter grieved me exceedingly at the time, and will always continue to grieve me in reminiscence or record. It is a simple fact that, from the time when the pamphlet had begun to work into the inner tissue of his feelings, Dante Rossetti was a changed man, and so continued till the close of his life. Difficult though it may be to believe this of a person so self-reliant in essentials as Rossetti—one who had all his life been doing so many things just as he chose, and because he so chose, and whether other people liked them or not—it is nevertheless the truth, as I know but too well.

On 2 June 1872 I was with my brother all day at No. 16 Cheyne Walk. It was one of the most miserable days of my life, not to speak of his. From his wild way of talking—about conspiracies and what not—I was astounded to perceive that he was, past question, not entirely sane. I went round for Mr. Scott, then living at No. 92 Cheyne Walk; and he (so I noted in my Diary), “as usual, acted in a spirit of the truest and kindest friendship.” This seems to be the occasion of which Mr. Scott speaks in his *Autobiographical Notes*. He says that “Mr. Marshall and Dr. Hake were there,” but my own impression is that that was on a slightly later day. It is a rather curious coincidence that, on this same 2 June, my brother completed the sale of the picture of which he had painted the background as far back as 1850 at Sevenoaks (see Section XVI.), and which he had recently completed under the name of *The Bower-meadow*. Messrs. Pilgeram and Lefèvre bought it for the large price of £735. When Mr. Lefèvre entered, Rossetti was in a state of nervous agitation, possessed with the delusion that all sorts of people were set against him, and trying to undervalue him; and I can recollect the stare of surprise

with which the picture-dealer received Rossetti's suggestion that, if the picture were not considered good value for its price, the agreement might be cancelled. Indeed such a suggestion was not less strange as coming from Rossetti, the paragon of artists at making a bargain, than as addressed to a picture-dealer (Gambart's successor) who was no novice at taking care of himself.

Another most unfortunate circumstance happened about the same time—I think a day or two later. Browning had just published his singular poem *Fifine at the Fair*, and he sent (as in previous instances) a presentation-copy to my brother. The latter looked into the book; and, to the astonishment of bystanders, he at once fastened upon some lines at its close as being intended as an attack upon him, or as a spiteful reference to something which had occurred, or might be alleged to have occurred, at his house. In a moment he relented, with an effusion of tenderness to this old, attached, and illustrious friend; but in another moment the scarcely credible delusion returned. Browning was regarded as a leading member of the "conspiracy"; and, from first to last, I was never able to discern that this miserable bugbear had ever been expelled from the purlieu of my brother's mind. He saw no more of Browning, and communicated with him no more; and on one or two occasions when the great poet, the object of Rossetti's early and unbounded homage, kindly enquired of me concerning him, and expressed a wish to look him up, I was compelled to fence with the suggestion, lest worse should ensue—no doubt putting myself in a very absurd and unaccountable position. Whether Browning ever knew that Dante Rossetti had conceived a real dislike of him, or supposed himself to have motive of definite complaint, I am unable to say. He was certainly far too keen to miss seeing that there was something amiss, and something which was kept studiously unexplained. Another extravagant fantasy took hold of my brother's mind at this or some other time—namely, that the wildly grotesque verses of Mr. Dodgson (whom he knew fairly well)

called *The Hunting of the Snark* were in fact intended as a pasquinade against himself. So Mr. Dodgson was another member of the conspiracy.

Thus then on 2 June I was dismayed to find my brother an actual monomaniac. I, who had known him from infancy, had never before seen or surmised the faintest seed of insanity in him. Wilful indeed he always was, but, so far from being mad, his strong idiosyncrasy had never trenched even upon what can be called the eccentric. He was eminently natural, as very many Italians are; and in this quality he followed, to my thinking, rather the Italian model than the English, which latter derives more from sturdy straightforwardness than from direct temperament. He was easy, abrupt when he liked, and transparently intelligible—except in so far as a high and subtle mind baffles one of a dull or conventional order. On that fatal 2 June, and for many days and months ensuing, I was compelled to regard my brother as partially insane, in the ordinary sense of that term. It was only after an interval of time, and as I had opportunity to compare and consider the opinions expressed by medical men and others well qualified to judge, that I came to the conclusion that he never had been and never became thus insane at all, but was on the contrary the victim of chloral, acting upon strained nerves, mental disquiet, and a highly excitable imagination—all these coupled with a grievous and fully justified sense of wrong. For many years past my conviction has been that hypochondria, consequent upon the over-dosing with chloral and alcohol—this, and not anything dependent upon constitutional unsoundness of mind—was the real secret of my brother's frenzied collapse. Mr. Caine, speaking according to his observation, which began in 1880, has expressed a like opinion.

From this point onward I shall assume in good faith (and my reader can part company with me if he chooses) that my brother's fantasies were those of a hypochondriac, not a madman; and that the hypochondria was directly due to

the chloral, but without leaving out of account those other incentives of which I have just spoken. Meanwhile, whatever the cause, his mind was truly not a sound one. He not only supposed things contrary to reason, but he had actual physical delusions or hallucinations. I cannot remember—then or afterwards—any visual delusions; but there were auditive delusions, as I shall have over-much occasion to specify.

Mr. Marshall was called in; and by his directions I summoned also Dr. Maudsley, the great authority on mental diseases. My brother, in his perverse mood, did not like Dr. Maudsley, and even went so far as to say that he was probably no doctor, but some one foisted upon himself for a sinister purpose. Of course I left the room during the medical inspection and consultation; nor can I affirm with accuracy what was the precise opinion that Dr. Maudsley formed of the case.<sup>1</sup> He agreed with Mr. Marshall that great care was requisite, and a cessation from all work and excitement.

Dr. Hake, in his *Memoirs of Eighty Years*, has written with much good feeling about these matters, and with that scrupulous reserve which marks an honourable medical man in any reference to a patient. He was the earthly Providence of the Rossetti family in those dark days. I shall borrow some of his observations, and supplement them. He says:—

“One morning [I consider that this must have been Friday 7 June] I visited him [Dante Rossetti] at Cheyne Walk, when I saw that the restlessness of the past night had pursued him into daytime. Qualifying his request with an expression of great regard, he asked me not to stay. His medical attendants were consulting in another room. I joined them there, and told them that my house at Roehampton was open to Rossetti, if they decided that he needed change. [A very pleasant roomy house it was, with a large well-kept garden.] On the same evening, in company with his brother and Mr. Madox Brown [I suppose Dr. Hake is correct with regard

<sup>1</sup> As to exact dates and details my Diary, which has sometimes stood me in good stead, assists me no longer hereabouts. I gave it up in despair on 5 June 1872, and did not resume it until 3 November.

to Brown, though I do not now realize to myself his presence], he came to Roehampton; and I remember well his saying, as he sat in my quiet drawing-room, that he was enjoying what he had so long ceased to feel, and that was peace."

I recollect that dismal cab-journey from Chelsea to Roehampton. It brought out the state of physical delusion besetting my brother as to sounds; for he insisted, several times during the transit, that a bell was being rung on the roof of the cab, to his annoyance; and, at the moment of dismounting at Dr. Hake's door, he tartly apostrophized the cabman with the words, "Why did you ring that bell?" The cabman looked blank, as might be expected. He had often been called for my brother from a neighbouring rank; and it is probable that, on getting back there, he imparted his opinion that "there must be something queer with Mr. Rossetti."

Dr. Hake's next phrase (which I shall proceed to quote anon) is "He sat up late in conversation" etc.; but to me it seems that he here mixes up the transactions of two different evenings. We arrived at Dr. Hake's house quite after dark, perhaps towards 10 P.M.; and little, I should say, was done beyond settling down for the night. The next day—Saturday by my reckoning—happened to be a very untoward one for my brother's retirement. It was the day preceding Whit-Sunday (or some such holiday-time); and, when we walked out under Dr. Hake's pleasant escort, we found any number of gipsy-vans and other vehicles encumbering the high-road. Rossetti's roaming ideas being still in the ascendant, he fancied that this might be a demonstration got up in his disparagement; and he was with difficulty restrained from running after some of the conveyances, and interchanging a wordy war with their drivers. Our walk was abridged; we returned to Dr. Hake's house, and the rest of the day passed in comparative quiet. However, after dinner some reading was proposed. Merivale's *Roman Empire* was handed to me, and I began reading aloud where I was told; and, as ill-

luck would have it, this passage detailed some of the tiger-monkey pranks played by Caligula or Domitian, to drive his submissive senators half out of their senses. The scenes depicted bore a perilous analogy to the grotesque encumbrances of my brother's brain. I came to a full stop, though greatly urged by him to proceed, as he wanted to know the too-appetizing details. I now recur to Dr. Hake :—

“He sat up late in conversation with his brother on various family-matters ; but his night was the most troubled one that he had hitherto passed through.”

The Doctor's laudable reticence as to this matter is partly followed by Mr. Bell Scott, who, in his *Autobiographical Notes*, says :—

“A cab was brought at once. We all thought it strange to see him [Rossetti] so willing to go ; but that night it was too evident he wanted to be secluded, and for three days he lay as one dead, and only by a treatment invented for the moment by Professor Marshall was he cured.”

It will be perceived that Mr. Scott shares the mistake of Dr. Hake in mixing up the occurrences of Friday evening and night with those of Saturday night ; nor is it clear why Dante Rossetti should have been more “secluded” in the house occupied by Dr. Hake, with one or more of his sons, and with my company to boot, than in his own house, in which he could command solitude if it so pleased him.

Putting together the statements made by these two writers, the reader may readily infer that something of a very exceptional kind took place in that night, really the night of Saturday. Rather than leave the matter open to dubious conjecture—which may possibly have been indulged in at large ever since the appearance of Scott's book in 1892—I will speak out, and relate the facts. In these, to a large extent, I took part at the moment ; others I heard from my brother soon afterwards.

Having gone to bed on the Saturday night, my brother

heard (this was of course a further instance of absolute physical delusion) a voice which twice called out at him a term of gross and unbearable obloquy—I will not here repeat it. He would endure no longer a persecution from which he perceived no escape. He laid his hand upon a bottle of laudanum which, unknown to us all, he had brought with him, swallowed its contents, and dropped the empty bottle into a drawer. Of course his intention was suicide; but it was a case in which suicide was prompted not only by generally morbid and fallacious ideas but by a real hallucination, and one therefore in which the constant verdict of “unsound mind” would have been both admissible and necessary. How he had obtained the laudanum I never knew. Maybe he had long had it about him as an opiate, even before he began the nightly course of chloral.

The Sunday opened calmly and hopefully. The fact that my brother did not appear at the family-breakfast was only conformable to his ordinary habits. Dr. Hake went up in two or three instances, and always found him sleeping with extreme placidity. He encouraged me to hope that this might be the beginning of a new lease of natural sleep, and that Dante would soon be taking a marked turn for the better. At last—this may have been towards four o’clock in the afternoon—he came down again, with an exceedingly grave face. He told me that such unusually prolonged sleep did not seem natural; that my brother’s appearance was no longer satisfying to a medical eye; and that the symptoms might almost point to serous apoplexy. I ran out for a neighbouring doctor, who came at once. His name has now lapsed from my recollection. He looked at Rossetti, and at once confirmed our worst fears. It was an evident case of “effusion of serum on the brain,” and the sufferer was already past all hope. He added that, if by chance he should survive at all, his intellect would be irrecoverably gone—a sentence far worse than death.

It became my harrowing duty to go to town as fast as a fly would carry me, and fetch my mother and my sister Maria,

to whom Dr. Hake forthwith proffered the hospitality of his house. Christina could not possibly accompany them. She was bed-ridden, and had been so to a great extent ever since April 1871, when an illness of great rarity attacked her—one of the most distressing in its symptoms I have ever witnessed—termed “Exophthalmic Bronchocele,” or “Dr. Graves’s Disease.” This illness stuck to her until the earlier months of 1873, and all that while her life hung upon a thread. In fact some marks of the malady clung to her until, from a different cause, she died on 29 December 1894. Mr. George Hake, the doctor’s youngest son, came up with me from Roehampton to Endsleigh Gardens. He was then an Oxford student, but some trouble with his eyes had compelled him to interrupt the collegiate course—a particularly manly, frank, kind-natured young man. Too well do I remember some of the incidents of that dreadful drive across London, and of my interview with members of the family; these I suppress. The family had advisedly been left uninformed of the sad condition of mind and body into which Dante had fallen for the last several days, although they knew that he was now at Roehampton, and that I had been much along with him of late. It is a singular fact that my mother—who was not at all a woman of presentiments and panics—had, some half-hour or so before I reached the house, been suddenly smitten with a sense that something grievous was occurring or impending, and with an eager desire to speed to Roehampton, and make enquiry.

Hurriedly we packed a few necessities, and returned to the fly—all of us convinced that Dante must have ceased to live before we could reach Roehampton. An aunt of mine, Eliza Harriet Polidori, occupied separate apartments in the Endsleigh Gardens house, and engaged to look affectionately after Christina. At the residence of Madox Brown, 37 Fitzroy Square, I got out, and announced the crushing calamity. Brown, the warmest and most helpful of friends, refused to regard the case as absolutely desperate, and ran off at once for Mr. Marshall, in Savile Row. And so—after nightfall in

early June, or towards nine in the evening—we started again, and rolled onward to Roehampton.

Arriving, we learned that Dante was still alive. Dr. Hake had stationed himself at his bed-head, and held to his nostrils a large bottle of strong ammonia, which staved off his sinking into total lethargy ; and I have little doubt that this wise precaution was the first and indispensable stage in the process which saved my brother's life. Very soon the Doctor took me quietly aside, and produced an empty bottle which he had found in a drawer. It was labelled "Laudanum—Poison." We exchanged few words, but were quite at one as to the meaning of this bottle ; and now we could at least dismiss the horrible idea of any such mortal illness as serous apoplexy, or of idiocy as its alternative, and could address ourselves to what was needed to counteract laudanum-poisoning. I will here add that the affair of the poisoning was never, from first to last, intimated to my mother, my sisters, or any other member of the family. They finished their days in ignorance of the facts.

Pretty soon Mr. Marshall arrived. He ordered strong coffee as the recognized antidote, which Dr. Hake himself prepared and administered, and then, to give no handle to prying curiosity, cleared away all the dregs. I do not see how Mr. Scott can be correct in regarding this treatment as "invented for the moment" by the distinguished surgeon ; but certain it is that all his measures were equally simple and efficient. Beyond the coffee, he did little or nothing except to keep the necessary functions of the body in exercise. When he left, our spirits were already considerably revived ; for my brother showed no sign of going from bad to worse, but something like a steady increase of vitality. His consciousness returned in the course of Monday, and for some hours he seemed free from any serious agitation. Mr. Scott therefore is mistaken in saying that "for *three days* he lay as one dead." The lethal trance only lasted from some hour in the night between Saturday and Sunday to some hour in the afternoon or even forenoon of Monday.

Unfortunately, when his bodily powers rallied a little, the gloomy and exasperating fantasies of his mind recurred as well, and by the evening of Tuesday things seemed in this respect worse than ever. What to do was a difficult problem. Dr. Hake's friendliness would have been equal to almost any strain that could be put upon it; but to propose to leave Dante with him indefinitely was what we could not do. To return for any length of time to Cheyne Walk, with all its distressful memories of the last few weeks, was a notion repugnant to my brother, and rejected by Mr. Marshall. In my own house, with Christina on a bed of sickness, perhaps of death, three other female inmates (not to speak of servants), and myself daily called away to a Government-office, Dante would just then have caused the most wearing anxiety. Ominous colloquies were held as to the benefit which Dr. Hake had known as ensuing from treatment in a private asylum. But in a day or two the difficulty was solved by the friend of friends, Madox Brown. Dante knew all the Brown family most intimately; Brown understood him at least as thoroughly as did any member of the Rossetti household; the house in Fitzroy Square was large and central. So on the Thursday my brother, not so greatly out of health, and in a state of mind passive, despondent, but no longer keenly excited, quitted Hake's residence, and was escorted to Cheyne Walk: on Monday 17 June to Brown's. In one respect his physical state was very disheartening. He suffered from hemiplegia, or partial paralysis in the region of the hip-joint, brought on, as Mr. Marshall said, by his remaining so long in a recumbent position, under the benumbing influence of the laudanum. He was in fact quite lame of one leg, and could only walk by the help of a stick. This continued very perceptible for some five or six months, and was not wholly overcome for another year or so. At last it was subdued—either entirely, or so greatly as not to raise any further notice. At Brown's house—though extremely dejected for the most part, and wholly unable to do any sort of work—my brother proved manageable enough. He caused no trouble

other than what devoted friendship was cheerfully prepared for.

I have given these painful details at some length, but shall not pursue with equal minuteness the course of Rossetti's troubles up to the date when his health and spirits took a very decided rally. He remained at Brown's house not more than some six or seven days, and was then, on 20 June, got off to Scotland to recruit. Mr. William Graham, M.P., who had bought the *Dante's Dream* and other pictures, placed at his unreserved disposal for a while, with great kindness and liberality, two mansions which he rented in Perthshire—first Urrard, and then Stobhall. It was not considered desirable that I should accompany my brother—partly because of my official ties, and partly because I might be (and assuredly should have been) depressed, and therefore depressing. Brown and George Hake took him down to Urrard, where he remained, I think, but a few days; then they removed with him to Stobhall, where Scott very considerably joined the party, relieving Brown, and, soon before Scott left, arrived Dr. Hake. Thus the company came to consist of the two Hakes along with Rossetti. After a while, early in September, the Doctor departed—from a farmhouse to which they had meanwhile removed at Trowan near Crieff—and Mr. Dunn then came down. My brother had by that time revived considerably, and had resumed painting—completing towards the middle of September the long-pending duplicate of *Beata Beatrix* for Mr. Graham. I will give a few details of the Scotch sojourn from Mr. Scott's book, and from Dr. Hake's. A very few more appear in the Family-letters; and, from letters addressed by my brother's friends to me at the time, I could largely increase them, but prefer to limit myself to these general outlines of a great downbreak; seething troublous fancies, and gradual but at last very marked recovery. Mr. Scott, who preceded Dr. Hake, writes as follows (I extract some particulars, and omit others):—

“The place where we lived—Stobhall, by the Tay near Perth—was, two centuries ago, one of the houses of the ancient family of

the Drummonds, the head of which—the Duke of Perth, as the Jacobites called him—lost everything in the Rebellion of 1715. It was originally a peel-tower, with a very uncommon appendage, a chapel of the same early date as the tower; and now it had one of the most charming old gardens I have ever seen, with Irish yews and hollies, trained by long years of careful shaping into straight columns 25 feet high, and roses almost reaching to the same height, supported on poles. The part we lived in was more modern. He could not take much walking-exercise. He could not bear reading, nor would he join us in the old game [whist]. I cannot help feeling that his malady was unique—different from other maladies, as he himself was different from other men. His delusions had a fascination, like his personality. In a few months his amazing power of resuscitation brought him back to health. He still continued to assert that *we* were under delusions, and not he himself, as to the number of his enemies; and it was difficult to make him own he had been ill at all.”

He had in fact not been exactly “ill,” apart from the laudanum-poisoning, the merely local hemiplegia, the malady treated surgically, and the mental disturbance resultant from chloral-dosing. And now for Dr. Hake:—

“It was not long before Rossetti’s occupation of the place [Stobhall] came to a close. He was fast improving in health. He took long walks, but without any enjoyment of the scenery, which was made romantic by waterfall and splashed leaves ever fresh, the elastic boughs bending under the weight of a torrent. So far recovered, he desired to remain in Perthshire, but still craved for the utmost solitude. In search of such a home, I took the train to Perth, visited St. Andrew’s, returned to Perth, and proceeded to Crieff, where I remained for some days, and scoured the environs. At last it occurred to me to call on the leading practitioner, Dr. Gairdner, and was directed by him to a farmhouse two or three miles from the town, on the riverside. The house had every requirement, and was kept by a lady-farmer, whose manner and person had every agreeable trait. We drove to the new home. It was a pleasant spot, with a walk into Crieff by the riverside, down to a wilderness of waters. There was plenty of mountain-scenery in view. Rossetti rapidly improved in health, stumping his way over long areas of

path and road, with his thick stick in hand, but holding no intercourse with Nature. It was not long before he summoned his assistant [Mr. Dunn], with the implements of his art, and he was once more happy. At this time he made a chalk drawing of me, and one of my son. As a domestic trait, I would mention that Rossetti was very hearty at all times over his meals. He would wear out three knives and forks to my one; and to me, whose breakfast seldom exceeded one cup of coffee, his plate of bacon, surrounded by eggs that overlapped the rim, was amazing. [My own experience of my brother's breakfasts corresponds with this. It should be understood however that he only ate two meals in a day. In London he wholly eschewed every sort of lunch, and I dare say at Trowan as well. He breakfasted copiously towards ten or eleven; then set to at painting, his ordinary allowance of which was every ensuing scrap of daylight; then, more or less late according to season, but often as late as nine in the evening or even afterwards, he dined, with abundance of appetite.] I may further truly say that he, not being a believer in physiological things, did not regard tea as possessing the attributes of totality. [Clearly, by this facetious phrase, the doctor means that Rossetti was much the reverse of a teetotaler. A teetotaler he never was; but in youth he was abstemious to a very unusual degree, and I question whether I ever once saw him exceed in wine or other stimulants at table. As to whisky-drams washing-down chloral, and now and then at some other time of the day, I have already spoken.] By a careful treatment of him I procured him good nights; effecting this object chiefly by remaining at his bedside, and draining my memory of every anecdote I had ever heard, and relating to him every amusing incident that I had encountered during life in my intercourse with the world. Finding him so well recovered, I left him in the hands of his assistant and of my son, after an absence of many weeks."

Here I may as well say that that malady requiring surgical treatment of which I made mention in Section XXIX., and which was ordinarily attended to by the eminent surgeon Mr. Durham (an old acquaintance), troubled my brother a good deal about this period; and, soon after his arrival in Scotland, it was even thought that Mr. Marshall might have to go down to relieve him. Ultimately, however, a local

surgeon was employed, and with entire success for the time.

Dante Rossetti was one of those men whose money-affairs, however prosperous in a general sense, would be sure, at any moment of crisis or disablement, to present difficulties and complications; one salient reason for this being that, upon undertaking any commission for a picture, he received instalments of payment to keep him going while the work was in progress, and thus, if the work came to a standstill, he owed money for paintings undelivered and undeliverable. When the great upset of 1872 took place, followed by some three months of enforced idleness, with an indisposition, amounting to incapacity, for attending to any details of business, the care of his money-matters devolved upon me. Mr. Scott's reference to this minor affair is highly erroneous.<sup>1</sup> He thinks that I was "so prostrated with anxiety that F. M. Brown took all business-matters out of my hand." Nothing of the sort was done. I was not prostrated, though I assuredly was afflicted, and, had I not been so, the more shame to me. My brother's money was removed from his own bank, and placed in Brown's bank (I had no bank of my own until two or three weeks later) in the joint names of Brown and myself. We drew joint cheques for my brother's occasions at first. After a very short time, a different arrangement was made, and I myself banked the money, and alone drew the cheques; and, as matters rapidly righted themselves, no sort of inconvenience ensued to my brother, his creditors, or any one else. One of the first things done, to raise convenient funds in hand, was to sell-off Rossetti's beautiful collection of blue china. I alone transacted this business, and secured an offer of £650. I informed my brother by letter, and he replied by letter on 4 July, ratifying the arrangement. Here again Mr. Scott was either much misinformed, or else he wrote from some mere supposition of his own—speaking of

<sup>1</sup> I said as much in a letter which I got published in *The Academy* towards the close of 1892, soon after the appearance of Mr. Scott's volumes.

"the disposal, without his [Dante Rossetti's] knowledge, of this assemblage of pots and dishes." On another point Mr. Scott is of course right—namely, that, when Dante quitted his Cheyne Walk house for Brown's or for Scotland, "it was thought proper to have all his pictures, finished or in progress, removed elsewhere. They were accordingly taken to my [Scott's] house, which was conveniently near, among them the huge *Dante's Dream*." We were naturally very glad to get these works out of Rossetti's house, left with no regular tenant, and much obliged to Mr. Scott for storing them. They were deposited in a large kind of brick-and-glass structure which stood in his back-garden, and which he himself used at times as a studio.

## XXXV.

*STAY AND WORK AT KELMSCOTT, 1872-4.—  
THEODORE WATTS.*

TRAVELLING southward from Scotland in the company of Mr. George Hake, Rossetti reached Kelmscott Manor-house on 24 September 1872; and, allowance being made for his partial lameness, he seemed healthy, robust, full of working-energy, and on the whole calm-minded, and even for the most part in excellent spirits. The reader will recollect that the Manor-house was occupied by Mr. Morris and his family jointly with Rossetti. They were not always there; but one or other member of the family, sometimes all of them together, were present very frequently; and thus my brother was usually supplied with plenty of congenial society, even apart from other friends of his from London who often ran down for some days. Mr. George Hake also was permanently with him, assisting him in secretarial and other work, at which he was equally expert and obliging. I saw my brother at Kelmscott for a week or so towards the end of October, and found him in very good trim, although occasionally something showed in his mind some trace of lurking suspicion

or prejudice. He continued taking chloral. In one instance at least, January 1874, I attended, under Mr. Marshall's directions, to getting the drug, before its being dispatched to Kelmscott, diluted, so that its strength was only half what my brother was left to suppose. At Kelmscott he abandoned shaving, and grew whiskers and beard all round—as some people thought, to the detriment of his appearance; moustaches he had worn for a long succession of years, though not in his very earliest youth. Having once begun a beard, he never left it off again. He continued keeping very late hours. According to Oliver Madox Brown—his old friend's son, then a youth of nineteen, who showed astonishing precocious faculty both in painting and in novel-writing, and who visited him in March 1874—the dinner-hour was 10 P.M.; and, according to Rossetti himself, on the occasion of a short visit from Mr. Howell, "3 A.M. gave place to 5 A.M. as bedtime before the house was clear of him." What could be expected for a man of forty-five, recovering from a fearful state of nervous prostration and enfeebled health, who, dining at 10, went to bed at 3 or 5, and dosed himself with chloral and alcohol before hoping for a wink of sleep? From these unnatural conditions a natural consequence had to ensue, and, after a longer interval than might have been counted upon, it did ensue.

It is in the opening days of this Kelmscott sojourn that I find the first trace of Mr. Theodore Watts in my brother's correspondence. As a solicitor, Mr. Watts, a friend of Dr. Hake, advised Rossetti in adjusting a provoking matter about a forgery which had recently been committed upon him, and of which the Family-letters exhibit something. As we all know, however, Mr. Watts is much else besides being a solicitor—a man of letters, poet, and critic; and very soon my brother found that this gentleman's converse and sympathy in literary matters were quite as welcome to him as his mastery of the law. As years went on, Mr. Watts became by far the most constant companion and mainstay of Rossetti, whether in relation to literary work, to business-affairs, or

to daily intercourse—daily, and indeed nightly as well. This unweariable friend was by him in all his requirements; and it is difficult to conjecture how Rossetti would, without him, have passed his closing years—certainly in some guise and under some arrangements very different from those which actually obtained. A letter from my brother to Madox Brown—dating, it may be, early in 1873—contains the following words, which he had occasion to repeat inwardly, if not outwardly, times out of number:—

“Watts left yesterday. He is a first-rate companion and a first-rate fellow—few equal to him in sterling qualities and cultivation.”

Mr. Charles Augustus Howell was a man of many activities, and into all of them he threw himself with great vivacity, enterprise, and push. He had ere now ceased to be Ruskin's secretary, and had become a speculator and dealer in works of art of many kinds. For the last year or two my brother had lost sight of him mostly or wholly. The latter had settled down at Kelmscott, an out-of-the-way place of great seclusion, because he deemed it necessary for his health and comfort, and for the avoidance of some of the worry and harass which in London seemed certain either to beset him, or to be regarded by himself as besetting him; and he had resumed painting with all zest and energy—equal at least to what had marked him in any earlier years. His style was now larger than aforetime, and his tone of mind for pictorial work more tense, though certainly not more inventive, nor so much a denizen of the realms of romance. With his acute eye for business, he soon saw that his isolation on the borders of four shires—Oxford, Gloucester, Berks, and Wilts—was not exactly adapted for confirming or improving his professional success. He had a few attached and steady purchasers—chiefly now Leyland and Graham; but these and others could not be continually running after him, to see what work was in hand, and to commission it if falling-in with their tastes. Rossetti therefore, soon after housing at Kelmscott, determined that he would have an agent in

London, to transact the sale of uncommissioned work and any other business on hand ; and he decided that Howell was his man for such purposes. Howell acquiesced with great alacrity. Whatever his faults, he was a man of lively feelings, capable of regarding a confiding friend with predilection, and even affection ; and I am satisfied that from first to last there was a very warm corner in his heart for Dante Rossetti. As a salesman—with his open manner, his winning address, and his exhaustless gift of amusing talk, not innocent of high colouring and of actual *blague*—Howell was unsurpassable ; and he achieved for Rossetti, with ease and also with much ingenious planning, many a stroke of most excellent professional business, such as other men, less capable of playing upon the hobbies or weaknesses of their fellow-creatures, would have found arduous or impossible. His very voice, with a scarcely perceptible foreign twang in it, was a gift of Nature which no art could have rivalled. He had a good footing in society, and in the world of art many ins and outs of connexion. Howell and Rossetti kept up at Kelmscott a very active correspondence ; and the painter entrusted to his agent several works, which he found to go off very much to his satisfaction. To all this there was a less pleasing side, which developed in course of time ; but I will here say with emphasis that my brother, long after he and Howell had parted company, assured me more than once that he had materially benefited in purse from Howell's exertions, had at no other time experienced equal facilities in disposing of his works, and had never been conscious of the least direct unfairness towards himself in the dealings of the highly resourceful Anglo-Portuguese. As my brother (though in some ways extremely heedless and lax in spending money) was always keenly alive to his own interests in acquiring it, and not at all the man to be long hoodwinked by anybody, and was in his later years more than duly suspicious of various persons, this testimony to the fair dealing of Mr. Howell—considerably decried in life and after death—should in justice not be lost sight of.

It may be as well to add (without entering into many details) that, at the beginning of the business-connexion between Howell and Rossetti, the former had a partner or quasi-partner, Mr. John R. Parsons, who was a relative of our old family friends the Keightleys. Mr. Parsons, a very pleasant young gentleman, had a financial backer who remained unknown to both Howell and Rossetti, and, owing to some dispute, mainly fomented or dictated by this backer, about an early *Proserpine* picture which my brother had forwarded for sale, the transactions with Mr. Parsons came to an end pretty soon, but left quite unaffected the transactions with Mr. Howell individually.

Very few things produced by Rossetti came so near to satisfying him as the *Proserpine*, in those two versions (not including the one just mentioned) which, in my other volume, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti as Designer and Writer*, I have termed Nos. 3 and 4. The latter was sold to Mr. Leyland, and the former to Mr. W. A. Turner. Mrs. Morris, the ideal sitter for such a subject, posed for the head. Proserpine, in perfect beauty shadowed with doom, is represented holding the pomegranate of which she had eaten in Hades, thereby unknowingly sentencing herself to the immortality of the nether world. A gleam of light from the outer sky strikes upon the background. Rossetti, as in several other instances, wrote a sonnet for this picture. It was first in Italian, and then in English. Great were the tribulations of the *Proserpine* canvases—seven in all, besides crayon-drawings. The first three were rejected; the fourth had ill-success with Mr. Parsons. Then my so-called No. 3 had its glass twice smashed and renewed, and twice it was lined to prevent accidents. Then No. 4 had its frame smashed twice, its glass once; it was nearly spoiled while under transfer to a new strainer; and, in transit to the purchaser, the glass was again much damaged, and some other things as well. Luckily there was only a scratch on the neck and cheek.

Other works proper to this Kelmscott period are: in oils, *La Ghirlandata*, a composition of three figures, in which

music is again, as in the *Veronica Veronese*, a principal element; *The Bower-Maiden* (or *Fleurs de Marie*), a pleasing picture without ideal quality; *The Blessed Damsel* (begun in 1873, or even in 1871, but chiefly the product of succeeding years on to 1877); *Dante's Dream*—the smaller, but still large, replica for Mr. Graham, after that gentleman had parted with the original work—was planned out by Mr. Dunn at Chelsea while Rossetti was at Kelmscott, but all the painter's own work upon this canvas belongs to a later date—a double predella is added to the replica only; *The Roman Widow* (or *Dîs Manibus*), a lady in a mortuary chamber, playing on two harps. In water-colour there was nothing of leading importance. In crayons or coloured chalk, *Ligeia Siren*, a portrait of Mr. Theodore Watts, and that (one of our illustrations) of my wife Lucy Brown, to whom I was married in March 1874. Some of these works have been mentioned before in another connexion. I will now only say that *La Ghirlandata* is, more obviously than usual, a picture having some symbolic intention, which different minds may be disposed to interpret differently; and that *The Roman Widow* seems to me quite unsurpassed, amid my brother's work, for pathetic sweetness and beautiful simplicity. If he painted one supremely loveable picture, it is, I think, *The Roman Widow*—even in preference to the *Beata Beatrix* or *The Beloved*.

As to poetry, Rossetti produced scarcely anything in this term of about two years. I could only name the sonnets on the *Proserpine* and on *Winter*. Painting kept him busy, along with correspondence, and sometimes personal colloquy, relating to the painting affairs. He brought out the re-cast of his old Italian translations, *Dante and his Circle*; thought, at the beginning of 1873, of publishing a new volume of original poems, but finally decided that these were not as yet sufficiently numerous; and projected a translation of all Michelangelo's poems, but never made a real commencement with this. Some one has invidiously said that Rossetti was "snuffed out by an article." Byron used this phrase erroneously,

though at that date excusably, about Keats ; but in relation to Rossetti it is obviously untrue. We here see that, within a few months after the *Contemporary* article had been re-issued as a pamphlet, he was seriously thinking of publishing a new volume of poems, and he did in fact publish one in 1881. The author of *The White Ship* and *The King's Tragedy* was not exactly snuffed out, whether critically or morally, whether by an article or by a libel.

I will add a word or two here about certain "Nonsense-verses" scribbled, or more generally extemporized and recited, by Rossetti. A few of them must have got into print here and there. In Mr. Scott's book four or more are inserted (one at least of these being pitiaibly mauled by a hand and ear less correct at rhythm than Rossetti's). Mr. Scott remarks as follows :—

"The habit of making satirical rhymes like these [two staves by Hueffer which had been cited] was an outcome of the appearance of Lear's *Book of Nonsense*. D. G. R. began the habit with us, the difficulty of finding a rhyme for the name being often the sole inducement. Swinburne assisted him, and all of us ; and every day for a year or two they used to fly about."

This practice may have commenced with Rossetti, I suppose, towards 1864 or 1865, and may have lasted up to 1874, but hardly beyond that. He produced scores of these Nonsense-verses, with the greatest ease ; many of them just about as good as such things can be made. Now and again one or other of them flits fitfully through my mind. If nobody preserved a goodish string of them, it is a pity. Possibly Mr. Swinburne's miraculous verbal memory, if he cared to exercise it on such a trifle, would recover many of Rossetti's stanzas, and also of those which other nimble-witted heads produced, his own included. My brother was, I think, the best of all for odd car-catching spontaneity. One of those given by Mr. Scott is a curious rhyming ingenuity. It relates to a young poet (his name by this date better remembered than his works) whom Rossetti knew and liked

well, and whose abilities he esteemed ; so of course the rhyme, for all its grotesqueness, is not in the least ill-natured in intention. I cite the lines as they appear in Mr. Scott's book, but (even apart from the meaningless substitution of the word "checkboard" for "chessboard") am not sure of their entire verbal accuracy :—

"There's the Irishman Arthur O'Shaughnessy—  
On the chessboard of poets a pawn is he ;  
Though bishop or king  
Would be rather the thing  
To the fancy of Arthur O'Shaughnessy."

In another instance a lady's Christian name, Olive, was named to my brother, and he was defied to rhyme to that. Quick as lightning came the response, much to the following effect :—

"There is a young female named Olive—  
When God made her he made a doll live" etc.

But Rossetti admitted that this was just a rhyme, and not an accurate description of the lady, to him (it may or may not be) unknown.

Though my brother was on the whole extremely well when he settled at Kelmscott in 1872, and only a little beset—hardly perturbed—by those fanciful ideas of widespread animosities and conspiracies etc. which had been so marked at the close of the spring and during the summer, he relapsed after a while, and I assume that chloral was again mainly conducive to this unfortunate result. In May 1874 Dr. Hake told me that, according to his son George, Rossetti exhibited signs of faintness sometimes after a walk or any exertion. When my wife and I visited him for a few days in the early summer of that year, we perceived that he was once more troubled with suspicions of servants and other persons, and by no means exempt from disquieting symptoms. Mr. Scott has seen fit to publish an anecdote relating to a slightly earlier date, and I will here extract it :—

"On 19 April 1874 I received these words by post: 'My dear Scotus, I am likely to be needing £200 in a few days, and happen unluckily at this moment to be run rather dry. Could you manage to lend it me? and if so to oblige me with a cheque at once?' Knowing his affairs to be prosperous at the time, I could not view this request with composure. He was living quietly at Kelmscott; but I came to the conclusion that it was my duty as his friend to keep his mind easy. Accordingly by next post the cheque was dispatched. By next again it came back to me in a note, saying he had 'just received some money, and he returned my cheque no less thankfully than if he had needed it.' He had by that time lost nearly every old friend save myself. Did he now suspect that I was among his enemies, and had he done this to try me? I fear this semi-insane motive was the true one."

Throughout April 1874 I was abroad, and necessarily I knew nothing of what was happening between Scott in London and my brother at Kelmscott. Even had I been in London, I might probably have remained alike uninformed. I cannot therefore elucidate this matter unless by conjecture. To me it seems abundantly probable that at some time in April my brother found occasion for some such amount as £200, and had it not at his immediate disposal; and that he acted *bonâ fide* in asking Scott for the sum, which Scott very liberally, though as he shows reluctantly, sent. My brother, it seems, returned the cheque forthwith, on the alleged ground that he had meanwhile received money from another quarter. This was, in itself, an unobjectionable and even a laudable proceeding. Moreover the alleged ground seems so likely that one might hardly have expected a different surmise to be put forward in reference to a "dear friend." And again, if the dear friend was really so stricken as to be "semi-insane," his conduct might have been construed more in sorrow than in anger. That Rossetti had then "lost nearly every old friend" save Mr. Scott is a gratuitous and an incorrect statement. There were Brown, Stephens, Hughes, Seddon, Boyce, Lowes Dickinson, Tebbs, John Marshall, Jones, Morris, Peter Paul Marshall, and Howell—not to cast

about for others. But it may well be that Scott was more likely than some of these to have ready money available, and he was the oldest friend of all.

Mr. Scott—I have more than once had occasion to say and to prove it—was extremely shaky in his dates. If it so happens that not 19 April, but 9 or 10 April, was the real date of Rossetti's first letter, there is a coincidence regarding money which seems to come particularly pat. On 10 April Mr. Leyland (I possess his letter) sent Rossetti a sum of £200 on account of *The Roman Widow*; and this sum must (assuming my conjecture to be accurate) have reached him just about the same time as Scott's cheque for the like amount. Of course I cannot *affirm* that Mr. Scott made here any such mistake as to the date, but I can scarcely help regarding it as the reverse of improbable.

Immediately after detailing this matter of the cheque Mr. Scott proceeds as follows:—

“A very short time after, he suddenly left Kelmscott for altogether, having got into a foundationless quarrel with some anglers by the river, unnecessary to describe.”

This is correct. I never knew with much precision the details of the quarrel referred to, but understand it to have been much on this wise. My brother was taking a riverside stroll along with George Hake, and saw a party of three or four anglers. He fancied that they called out to him in an insulting way; which was either a morbid mis-hearing of something which they really said, or perhaps an actual physical delusion. Ireful, impetuous as usual, and now totally reckless of probable consequences, Rossetti ran up to the anglers, and with vigorous abuse retorted upon the supposed insult. Mr. Hake had to follow as fast as he could, and, offering whatever explanation came uppermost, parted the antagonists. The anglers could not fail to be astonished; rumours of the strange outburst began to circulate; and Rossetti found that Kelmscott had ceased to be a place of comfort for him, and had become or would rapidly be

becoming a hotbed of discomfort. So he returned to London and Cheyne Walk towards the latter end of July. He never again set his foot in Kelmscott Manor-house.

## XXXVI.

*LONDON AND ELSEWHERE, 1874-8.*

I AM now getting on towards the end of the life of that man of astonishing genius, ardent initiative, vigorous and fascinating personality, abundant loveableness, many defects, and in late years overclouded temperament and bedimmed outlook on the world, whom it was once my privilege to call brother. I wish to present a true picture of him to the reader. This, not an easy task even in the case of a far more ordinary man, is truly difficult when one has to deal with so complex a personage—one who, with so much height and depth, combined so many excesses of feeling, inequalities of impression, and discords of act. In some previous instances Mr. Bell Scott's book has served to determine what is the least favourable light in which the proceedings of Dante Rossetti can be viewed. I will again have recourse to it for opening the present Section, which will chiefly concern my brother's condition of health mental and physical, and his demeanour in that connexion.

No sooner has Mr. Scott disposed of the incident of the anglers at Kelmscott than he continues in the following terms :—

“He sent for me [on re-settling in Cheyne Walk]. I found him quiet and taciturn. He only said the change would do him good. From that time, till now that I write this, he has lived within the house, never even going into the street, never seeing any one.”

This turn of phrase makes it obvious that Mr. Scott was writing at some date during Rossetti's lifetime; and the ensuing reference to Mr. George Hake suggests that the date was not very long after the parting of my brother, January 1877,

from that gentleman. Now it is totally untrue that Rossetti, between July 1874, when he returned to London from Kelmscott, and some time in 1877, never went into the street. It is quite correct that he did not go to and fro in the streets, in a casual sort of way, to any extent worth mentioning ; but he went out constantly—I believe only occasionally missing a day—in the late evening. His habit was to enter a fly from his own door with George Hake, and drive up to some airy spot, very often the Circles of Regent's Park. There he got out, took a longish walk with his companion, and then re-entered the fly, and drove home. I am far from saying that this was a wholly rational proceeding, or that it did not bespeak a certain exaggerated craving for seclusion ; but it is a very different thing from “living within the house, and never going even into the street.” Besides, as we shall see, there were three absences in the country, two of them of considerable duration, in 1875, 76, and 77. Mr. Scott's addendum, “never seeing any one,” is, in its literal sense, at least as incorrect as the other statement about house and street. I suppose however that the real meaning is that Rossetti never went now to other people's houses to see them. Even this is not absolutely accurate ; but it approaches towards accuracy, and with this, from our present author, we may count ourselves content.

It deserves some consideration moreover that the habit of walking out in the late evening, and not in the day, was not altogether a novelty with Rossetti, brought on by that general change of feeling which resulted from the Buchanan pamphlet of 1872. There is a letter of his to Mr. Shields, 24 December 1869 (published in *The Century-guild Hobbyhorse*, No. 16), which says that he was then, in fine weather, in the practice of taking long walks in Battersea Park, “whereas my habit had long been to walk only at nights, except when in the country.” This habit, bad as it was in hygiene, can easily be accounted for. He rose late ; painted all day as long as light served him ; then dined ; and, whether winter or summer, all was darkness tempered by gaslight or moonlight by the hour he left the house,

Scott proceeds :—

“Holman Hunt, Woolner, and other artists, had left him long ago ; now Swinburne and Morris were not to be seen there. Even Dr. Hake deserted him, feeling aggrieved by his patient and long-suffering son George being driven away after several years’ sacrifice. The old Doctor would see him no more.”

About Hunt and Woolner I have already said something ; but to speak of “other artists” who “had left” Rossetti, without referring to Madox Brown, who continued to see him with all the olden affection and much the same as the olden frequency (so far as his calls in Cheyne Walk were concerned), is, to say the least, an omission. There were others also—especially Shields when in London—and other details could be added substantially diminishing the force of what Scott says about artists ; but I need not enlarge upon this, nor upon the poets Swinburne and Morris, who best know what line of conduct they did or did not adopt. The allegation that Dr. Hake “deserted him,” and “would see him no more,” is not accurate. He held aloof for a while ; but in October 1878 he himself told me that he had then recently written to my brother, intimating the continuance of his friendly feelings ; and it was only because Rossetti replied in a tone which (although responsive in cordiality) appeared to the Doctor like a farewell, that he abstained from taking further steps for renewing the intimacy. I think his re-appearance would have been a satisfaction, and am sure it would have been a benefit, to my brother. In December 1878 they exchanged other friendly notes.

About Mr. George Hake there might be a good deal to say. I don’t know what his “several years’ sacrifice” amounted to. He was a young man without a profession, and without (so far as I ever saw or heard) any definite expectation of employment of whatsoever kind. My brother, at the opening of their connexion, liked him much, found him extremely pleasant and accommodating, and ready to do whatever came to hand, and engaged him as secretary at a salary which I suppose to be highly adequate if not

liberal, and which was punctually paid. Moreover the residence at Kelmscott was quite convenient to Mr. George Hake—the place being very near Oxford, where he completed his academical course during that interval of time. I will openly say that from first to last I never witnessed any solid ground of complaint given to my brother by Mr. Hake; but Dante did at times, as the connexion wore on, mention circumstances to me which he clearly believed to be true, and which, under that belief, he was warranted in taking into account. That he was fanciful in these chloralized years is plain; and that he could at all times of his life get more angry on a sudden than beseems a philosopher, and comport himself with more of abruptness and vehemence, is also allowed. For some while before the parting came, he thought it had better come pretty soon, yet continued to temporize. At last there was an outburst, and the parting ensued. I, scanning the matter from my own point of view, regretted this upshot not a little. After a while irritation abated, and my brother met his late secretary again—at any rate in August 1880.—But all this about Mr. George Hake is really a private affair, and would not have appeared in my pages at all, but that Mr. Scott saw fit to give it prominence as derogatory to my brother.

Mr. Scott next adverts to that matter, proper to the year 1872, about Browning's *Fifine at the Fair*. It is noticed in Section XXXIV. Scott's reference to it is exaggerated in expression, but that need not detain us. One sentence is the reverse of the fact—viz., "Browning, as his manner was, had never acknowledged Rossetti's presentation-copy of his *Poems*, and now this confirmed him to be among the enemies." Browning *did* acknowledge that presentation-copy, and acknowledge it with praise. I have said so in Section XXXII., and I still possess his letter. Why did Mr. Scott make this allegation? Apparently because he misremembered a statement, occurring in a letter from my brother, August 1871, that Browning had not acknowledged the volume of 1861, *The Early Italian Poets*. This statement (as its context

shows) merely illustrates the thesis that Browning was hostile to all translating work ; but one phase of Mr. Scott's inner consciousness certified him that his "dearest of friends and most interesting of men"<sup>1</sup> was a remarkably flabby creature, and so he introduced this random assertion. It might indeed be contended that the allegation that Browning did not reply as to the *Poems* does not convey any imputation upon Rossetti ; but it conveys, and appears aimed to convey, the imputation that Rossetti's delusive notion about Browning and *Fifine* was the outcome of wounded vanity, occasioned by the non-acknowledgment of the recent volume.

I continue quoting :—

"Only two quite new men were now to be seen about him. One was William Sharp, a poet to be ; the other, Theodore Watts, who, being professionally a lawyer, managed everything for him, and who was just then beginning to write criticisms in the weekly papers, so was looked upon by poor D. G. R. as doubly important. Happily Watts has been invaluable since then in many ways ; fascinated by Rossetti, ill as he was, and always ready and able to serve him."

In this passage Madox Brown—not to speak of any one else—is again ignored. The designation of date comes in the word "now" in the opening sentence, and one does not know what the "now" may have been. The suggestion that Mr. Sharp was frequently with Rossetti by the date when Mr. Watts "was just beginning to write criticisms in the weekly papers" appears to me erroneous. But, considering that "poor D. G. R." is duly pitied by Mr. Bell Scott, and Mr. Watts duly praised, one may excuse this.

Then comes the conclusion of this chapter of the *Autobiographical Notes* :—

"For myself, Rossetti had been the last of a succession of men I had loved, and had tried to make love me. For each of them I would have given all but life, and I was again defeated by destiny. Equal candour and confidence he never had to give ; but now his

<sup>1</sup> Scott's *Illustrations to the King's Quair*, p. 19.

singular manias made ordinary friendly intercourse impossible to him. After having been both his banker and his nurse, I could not depend upon him either in action or word. Still I remained faithful to the old tie, and Miss Boyd agreed in doing so also. We continued our occasional visits, either morning or evening, the only two of all his old circle."

All this seems (so far as its diction is concerned) to relate to the same period when Mr. Watts was "just beginning" etc.; and, if so, it is monstrous to say that Miss Boyd and Scott, to the exclusion of Brown, were "the only two of all his old circle." It is however true that Brown did not see Rossetti for some while at the close of 1877, and during 1878 and a part of 1879; and in August 1881 he settled in Manchester, and the two old friends could barely meet again some two or three times. Mr. Scott disparages Rossetti's "candour and confidence" at all times of their intimacy, and later on "could not depend upon him either in action or word." As to the candour and confidence, I question whether Rossetti showed any deficiency in these. He was cordial, outspoken, and in fact far too communicative of matters which, affecting others as well as himself, he ought to have kept locked up in his own breast. His public letters to Mr. Scott have an air of great frankness and *bonhomie* joined with affection. And, as to the statement that Mr. Scott "could not depend on him either in action or word," I may observe that Scott's letters to Rossetti, of which several belonging to this period are extant in my hands, do not indicate any want of such dependence—they have the external marks of free interchange of thought and information upon such subjects as came uppermost. It is indeed true that my brother continued liable to morbid fancies and needless suspicions, and, in relation to these, he must often have propounded as fact something which was only supposition on his part, and unfounded supposition.

I have now done with this passage in Scott's book; and can only regret having had to point out so much of misstatement and over-statement in the writing of a thoughtful

man, of many fine gifts and feelings, upon his "dearest of friends," whom he knew moreover to be in some respects an invalid, and thus one to whom indulgence might have been an acquaintance's duty and an old familiar's prerogative.

In these years the state of my brother's health, his spirits, and his mental impressions upon particular points, was frequently unsatisfactory, though there were rallies in respect both of physical well-being and of cheerfulness. Mr. Watts was certainly much oftener with him than any one else, serving to keep him in tone, and endlessly helpful in a variety of ways. I regret to say that I myself saw my brother but little—living at the other end of London, occupied with official work all day, and commonly with literary work in the evening, recently married, and with growing family-ties of my own. Towards the end of 1875 Rossetti felt a great need of changing from London and its associations. He went to Bognor, renting a house named Aldwick Lodge, and here he remained till about the end of June 1876. He was constantly occupied in painting at Aldwick Lodge, and received there several friends, and most of the members of his family. No doubt my wife and I would have gone likewise at some time, but there was a baby, and also a nurse; and my brother expressly said (the question arose in November 1875) that he would not house the nurse. Dr. Hake speaks of the Lodge as

"a commodious villa and grounds, in a lane west of the town, and near to the roughest bit of beach on the Sussex coast. The villa had good rooms. Upstairs was a gallery, with bedchambers on both sides, and ending in a large apartment which became a studio." In the afternoons Rossetti "took a violent walk [his pace was always a resolute and rather quick one] over the boulders by the sea towards Selsey Bay, among the ruined wooden groynes which had become sea-weed gardens, hideous of aspect, as if invented and laid out by fish made man."

Dr. Hake holds that Rossetti took no heed of the scene; whereas another writer<sup>1</sup> (I cannot say an authority) assumes

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Wood.

that he now first took pleasure in the sea and sea-walks. I hardly know why this should be affirmed—he had from of old known such places as Boulogne, Hastings, and Clevedon—but it is true that, whether at Bognor or elsewhere, he indulged in sea-trips scarcely at all. As he was a very qualmy sailor, sea-sickness assailed him with great virulence and pertinacity.

During Rossetti's stay near Bognor a libel-case was going on in London, Mr. Buchanan suing Mr. Peter Taylor, then proprietor of *The Examiner*. Rossetti was not in the faintest degree concerned in writing or prompting any of the matter charged as libellous; but this matter involved in part an attack upon the conduct of Mr. Buchanan in relation to his article in the *Contemporary Review*. My brother was extremely desirous of avoiding all sort of intermixture in this trial, and that may, I think, have been one reason why his stay at Aldwick Lodge was so prolonged. He returned to Chelsea almost as soon as the trial was over. Let me add, in fairness to Mr. Buchanan, that the jury agreed with him in considering he had been libelled, and they gave him damages to the amount of £150. Whether they were right or wrong is a question I can leave alone.

Hardly had my brother returned to London when he went to Broadlands in Hampshire, staying there for the better part of the month of August. Broadlands was the seat of the Right Honourable William Cowper-Temple and his wife (soon afterwards Lord and Lady Mount-Temple). The husband had some years previously become the owner of Rossetti's picture of *Beata Beatrix*, now in the National Gallery. Of the profuse kindness which he received in this mansion, and of his ardent admiration of his host and hostess, more especially the latter, his Family-letters bear ample record. Here he met Mrs. Georgina Sumner, a lady mentioned in Section XXVII. Mrs. Sumner also became a greatly attached friend of his, and favoured him in London with sittings for some of his works. Rossetti was not at all well at Broadlands; suffering from pains in the limbs (which recurred at intervals afterwards),

and from "nights of utter unrest." His spirits however improved. I apprehend that this flitting to Broadlands—highly satisfactory though it proved in some respects—would not have been undertaken, but for the fact that my brother was now having some alterations effected in his studio. He heard—or imagined—objectionable noises from an adjoining house; and he got the room-wall near the fireplace doubled, and the space filled in with thick wadding. Mr. Watts and Mr. Dunn attended to this cumbrous job, while Rossetti along with George Hake was at Broadlands. The adjoining house was occupied by a musician, Mr. Malcolm Lawson, and some members of the family—Malcolm being a brother of the distinguished young landscape-painter Cecil Lawson. I have always had reason to suppose that the Lawsons and their associates were perfectly well affected to my brother, and would indeed have been proud to cultivate intercourse with him; but he did not think so, and fancied that there was a large and frequent amount of unnecessary noise from that house and its small grounds, audible both in his studio and in his garden, and annoying, and intended to annoy, him. I remember there was once a thrush hard by, which, to my hearing, simply trilled its own lay on and off. My brother discerned a different note, and conceived that the thrush had been trained to ejaculate something insulting to him. Such is perverted fantasy—or I may rather infer such is an outcome of chloral-dosing.

Returned from Broadlands, Rossetti was constrained by medical orders to face two nights without any chloral at all; and soon he tried mesmerism, with a result of better nights and no pain in the limbs. A Miss Chandos appears to have been the mesmerist, associated with Mr. Chandos Leigh Hunt, a relative of the poet-essayist.

I must now recur to that matter which I have mentioned before (Sections XXIX. and XXXIV.) of an inconvenience from which my brother suffered requiring surgical treatment. This malady—which I surmise had not been at all attended to since the late summer of 1872—came to a severe crisis in

the middle of June 1877. It is referred to in an article which Mr. Theodore Watts published in February 1895,<sup>1</sup> and I could not perhaps do better than borrow his clear account of the incident:—

“ I cannot refrain from saying here a word about a certain occasion in the year 1877 when he was extremely ill—not from the effects of insomnia, but from a different cause altogether. He had for years been subject to a certain organic disturbance which, though under timely and skilful treatment it is not considered to be dangerous, will become full of peril, and will indeed end fatally, if, in certain of its developments, it is neglected or treated unskilfully. In 1877 this ailment took a somewhat serious form. Yet our friend the eminent surgeon John Marshall was not greatly alarmed, knowing that, should it occur that the symptoms did take an aggravated turn, he had but to perform a surgical operation in order to give relief. This operation however was one of great delicacy, and the aggravated symptoms necessitating it were apt to come on suddenly. Marshall therefore left instructions with the housekeeper that, should Rossetti seem to be suffering from an accession of illness, she was to take a cab, and go at once to him at Savile Row. The symptoms did come on quite suddenly; but, as Rossetti was determined that he would undergo no operation save in my presence, the housekeeper, obeying his commands (which were always given with a Napoleonic imperiousness), came to me at Putney, instead of going straight to the doctor. On reaching Cheyne Walk, and seeing (as I thought) that a serious rupture of internal blood-vessels had taken place, I went to Marshall, and at once, and fortunately found him in. My description of the state of things alarmed him. We called for a chloroformist, and drove off to Cheyne Walk as fast as possible. The operation was performed with all Marshall's usual skill, but afterwards Rossetti fell into a state of the greatest weakness. I sent for his unfailing friend Madox Brown to consult with Marshall, who advised that Rossetti should be taken to the seaside. Herne Bay, as being near to London, was the place selected, and thither he was taken by Brown—or rather to a little place called Hunter's ForeSTALL. In a very little time Mrs. Rossetti, Christina, and myself, went down to Herne Bay, and found Gabriel in a lamentable state of depression.”

<sup>1</sup> *Recollections of Christina Rossetti*, printed in *The Nineteenth Century*.

I have only a few remarks to make in amplification of this narrative. Although it is entirely true that this upset had no direct connexion with insomnia, still Mr. Marshall informed me at the time that the heavy doses of chloral retarded recovery from the operation, and he once more urged that they should be reduced ; and at the seaside they gradually *were* reduced, standing at 30 or 40 grains instead of 180. But the notion of leaving it off entirely was what Rossetti would not entertain. He wrote to Brown, and not without a certain show of reason :

“The fact is that any man in my case must either do as I do, or cease from necessary occupation, which cannot be pursued in the day when the night is stripped of rest altogether.”

The “Napoleonic imperiousness” is a good descriptive phrase of Mr. Watts ; yet it should be understood that there was always about as much of good-nature as of command in my brother’s address to servants and dependants, and he was throughout life a prime favourite with all such people. They would have done for him much more through liking than for most other men through subservience. Two full months, with a hired nurse in the house, elapsed between the operation and the departure from London ; and it was only on 16 August that Brown and I succeeded in almost forcing Dante into Brown’s house, and thence on the following day he proceeded with his old friend to Herne Bay itself—Hunter’s Forestall, as being more peaceful and retired, coming two or three days afterwards. The nurse remained with him all the while, only leaving when my brother returned to town on 8 November. Even after reaching his seaside retreat (at which Mr. Shields also was a visitor for a time) Rossetti was for a good while incapable of doing a stroke of designing-work, and greatly feared that he would never be a painter again. At last the power and the determination returned simultaneously ; he drew an admirable crayon-group (head and shoulders) of our mother and sister, two others equally good of the latter, and yet another of our mother. Weather had been favourable, spirits and energy revived, and he came back to town nerved

once more for the battle of art and of life. Mr. Marshall declared that he looked ten years younger. It may be noted that, in a letter to Brown from Hunter's Forestall, my brother said :—

“I attribute any possible improvement to my having greatly diminished my wine; I now may almost say that I take none in daytime, and much less at night.”

It must have been during my brother's stay at Hunter's Forestall that he wrote a note to Mr. Dunn asking him to collect together all the letters lying about in various receptacles in the studio at Chelsea,

“and lock them in the iron safe outside the studio. The unaccountable wholesale disappearance of large batches of letters some time back renders this more advisable.”

This is an odd detail; and gives me occasion to say that, though my brother was, in his later years, unreasonably suspicious of various persons and things, some matter did nevertheless really occur now and again which suggested serious tampering with his concerns, and called for corresponding vigilance. I do not recollect—possibly I never heard—about the “wholesale disappearance” etc. My brother, all through his life, received very large numbers of letters, and at his death comparatively few were to be found, belonging chiefly to his last eight or nine years. I think that on leaving Chatham Place he burned almost all the then extant correspondence. In a later instance, which may have been towards 1871, he got Christina to destroy huge bundles of letters which had again accumulated. This was quite in her line, for she always burned, with the fewest exceptions, every scrap of writing that she ever received. I cannot but regard with great regret the loss of all the early correspondence of the P.R.B. days, which would serve towards setting in its true light that movement of not less than historical importance in the British School of Art.

I must recur a little to the pitiable subject of chloral. Mr.



*By D. G. Rossetti.*

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

1848.



Marshall, Rossetti's principal medical adviser, was not one of those doctors who think it desirable to traverse beyond a certain point the wishes and settled habits of their patients; although it is most true that he earnestly and repeatedly endeavoured to check and diminish the chloral-dosing. A letter of his, in July 1876, intimates that Sir William Jenner then tried to reduce Rossetti's chloral to 20 grains a night; but Marshall thought this too restrictive, and sanctioned 36, or in exceptional cases even 48, grains. In April 1878 Mr. Dunn informed me that my brother was then taking about 50 grains, besides keeping his usual late hours, and limiting his walking to his own garden—a practice which may I think have begun soon after his return from Hunter's Forestall, and which continued with hardly any interruption ever afterwards. In January 1879 the chloral was 92 grains, and had recently been even more. In November of the same year Mr. Marshall wrote that Messrs. Bell & Co., the chemists, had protested against supplying twelve bottles of chloral every eight or nine days; on the previous day they had sent two bottles, and would henceforth make it only one per day. In this decision Mr. Marshall concurred; and he pointed out to Rossetti that, as Mr. Dunn had then temporarily left the Chelsea house, and his regulating influence was thus withdrawn, it became all the more imperative to limit the supply of the drug. My brother obtained chloral chiefly from two firms, Messrs. Bell and Messrs. Dinneford. At his death their outstanding bills came in to me. I forget the exact amounts, but am probably not far wrong in saying that the two together reached well on towards £100! This was for some months, ending in the middle of December 1881. Chloral was then, at length, totally abolished, and was never resumed.

The episode of Hunter's Forestall produced one unfortunate result—a passing interruption to the intimate personal relations between Madox Brown and Rossetti. Brown thought that Rossetti was extravagant and heedless in household matters; and so he was, though he made various attempts at control and retrenchment, in which Mr. George

Hake, and more especially Mr. Dunn, seconded him to the best of their power. Brown therefore, at the seaside, recommended Rossetti to dismiss his two female servants. There had recently been also a man named Albert (succeeding various other men of earlier years), but he, I fancy, had left soon after the nurse came. My brother reflected upon Brown's advice, and came to the conclusion that his then female servants suited him well enough (which was also my own opinion), and he therefore declined to part with them. Brown took this in some dudgeon, and determined not again to call in Dante's London house while those servants were there. He told me he "would not be made the laughing-stock of all London"—which I could not but regard as a very exaggerated view of the interest which Londoners would or could take in any phase of the incident; but my honoured father-in-law was at all times rather sensitive to the actual or supposed opinion of "the world." Brown therefore, upon my brother's return to London, re-appeared for a while no more. Ultimately those servants were gone, and others re-placed them. This may have been towards August 1879; and it was only then that he offered to return—receiving the cordial response, "You would of course have been most welcome all along, and will be simply the same now." No further coolness ensued between the two old friends, and I am clear that in this instance my brother had not put himself in the wrong.

For some time past—ever since his health revived in Scotland in 1872—Rossetti had been entertaining projects of leaving his Chelsea house, and finding accommodation somewhere else in the outskirts of London. He required premises of good size, with a proper studio, spacious grounds, retired situation, and none the less convenient access to and from the heart of London. House after house was propounded and inspected—generally by Dunn or George Hake. None of them met all the rather exceptional requirements. So at last, in January 1878, Rossetti determined to renew his tenancy of Tudor House, though at double his original rent—

*i.e.*, at £200 per annum, and with the warning that sooner or later his fine garden would for the most part be built over. Even £200 was in fact not a very high rent, considering the great rise in the value of property in that neighbourhood.

In the years 1874 and 1876 two deaths occurred which afflicted my brother very sensibly.

The first, 5 November 1874, was the decease of Oliver Madox Brown, not yet aged twenty. Rossetti had for years entertained the highest opinion of the genius and the future of this surprising youth, whether as painter or as novelist, and even in part as poet. Pyæmia attacked him from some unascertained cause, and he died after several weeks of acute suffering. I need scarcely say that my brother was foremost among those who came forward to soothe, so far as might be, the anguish of the heart-stricken father and family. I can recollect that, on receiving a few lines of sympathy from my brother in the first hours of bereavement, Brown said to me, "It is always Gabriel who speaks the right word."

It is however an untoward fact that, when Oliver's posthumous writings were published in 1876, Rossetti, then at Aldwick, received such a "painful impression" from something he read in them that he laid the book aside altogether. He must have thought that some character or incident in the work was intended to animadvert upon himself. What this was I never knew. To press my brother upon such a topic was not judicious; "the less said the better." I doubt whether there is in the book anything even distantly involving my brother. There *might* have been, for Oliver did avowedly base one or two of his personages upon individuals of his acquaintance. Whatever his feelings about the young novelist's performance, or about the spirit in which he had written, my brother did not cease to speak highly of his gifts. This is apparent in Mr. Hall Caine's book.

The second death was that of our sister Maria, on 24 November 1876, aged forty-nine. Maria was intensely devotional—I think more warmly and spontaneously so than any other person I have known. She had long contemplated

finishing her days as a member of an Anglican sisterhood—the All Saints' Home in Margaret Street, Regent Street. When my approaching marriage was notified in the summer of 1873, she, considering herself to be thus freer than before from family-ties, announced that she would no longer defer her project. She became a novice, and later on a professed sister. She had before this, in 1871, published one book of no little merit and repute, *A Shadow of Dante*, considered very mainly from the religious point of view. In the Home she was treated with all kindness and consideration, and she delighted beyond measure in the religious life; but her health soon grew uncertain, and by the middle of September 1876 it became apparent that she was not long to survive. There was an internal fibroid tumour, with dropsical complications. Her severe sufferings were borne with more than resignation and fortitude—almost with rapture, for to her the promises of religion were the most assured certainties—the only perfectly assured ones. With Dante, and also with myself, she had more than one earnest colloquy on religious subjects as the end approached. On 29 November we all attended her funeral, as a "Sister of the Poor," in Brompton Cemetery. This was, since the death of my father in 1854, the first gap in the Rossetti household. The next was to be the death of Dante himself in 1882, followed by my mother in 1886, and by Christina in 1894. There were also my own losses—an infant son in 1883, and in 1894 my wife. Between 1854 and 1876 there had been three deaths in the Polidori family—Philip in 1864, Margaret in 1867, Henrietta Polydore (my uncle's daughter) in 1874.

## XXXVII.

*INCIDENTS AND TRANSACTIONS, 1874-81.—HALL CAINE.*

AFTER my brother's return from Kelmscott to London in 1874 one of the first matters which engaged his attention was the dissolution of the partnership, Morris, Marshall, Falkner, & Co. The firm was by this time fully established as of

high mark, but it was not yet a flourishing commercial concern. Mr. Morris, as I have said from the first, was in every sense the leading partner, the one who devoted most time and energy to the work, and the one who had invested most money in it. He now thought that he would like to be sole master in the house ; not indeed discarding his old associates so far as they might see fit to continue furnishing appropriate work for pay, but no longer dividing with them the actual profits of the firm. All the others had their own professions, and consequent incomes. Mr. Morris had no other definite profession—only his admirable work as a poet. In this view of the affair most of his partners concurred—Burne-Jones, Webb, Falkner, and my brother. Peter Paul Marshall might, after the first impulse of irritation, be regarded as nearly neutral. Madox Brown however was a determined opponent. He saw no reason why he should forego advantages already secured to him. He was getting on in years, with a wife and son to support ; he had always calculated upon the firm as an important eventual accession to his professional earnings ; and he had no notion either of retiring voluntarily, or of being bought out unless under compulsion. Circumstances were too strong for him, and he was bought out, receiving a handsome sum. The affair, both at the time and for some years ensuing, was a painful one to the friends of Brown and of Morris. I am glad to leave it undetailed, apart from the one point which immediately concerns my narrative—and that is that my brother's attitude was always one of conciliation, and a wish to adjust contending claims, had that but been possible. He himself retired from the firm without desiring any compensation for his own benefit. A sum was however assigned to him. He laid it apart for the eventual advantage of a member of the Morris' family, but, ere his death, circumstances had induced him to trench upon it not a little.

There is a small matter, detailed in Mr. Bell Scott's book, which I would rather not have seen in print at all,<sup>1</sup> but which,

<sup>1</sup> Professor Minto, the Editor of Mr. Scott's book, rightly and necessarily asked me, before going to press, whether I would authorize the insertion

being in print, must not be left unnoticed here. Mr. Scott summarizes a letter which my brother, being then at Aldwick Lodge, addressed to Miss Boyd on 3 November 1875. The letter relates to various topics having no connexion with that which appears in its postscript, and which is thus put by Mr. Scott:—

“In a postscript he says he is forced to reopen his letter to tell what he designates a wondrous tale. Some four years ago G. F. Watts, R.A., painted a head of him, for which he only gave that artist two sittings, and which remained unfinished. His impression of it was appalling (though possibly from the exactness of its likeness), and people have ever since kept telling him it was horrible. Accordingly he executed a *coup de main*. He finished a spare chalk-drawing, and sent Dunn with it to Little Holland House [Mr. Watts’s then residence], sending also a note saying that he should be very much obliged if Watts would make an exchange, as he wanted the picture, not for himself, and that the bearer would call next day at same time for it, to save trouble. ‘This resulted,’ he continues, ‘in my getting the picture next day, though Watts’s note with it showed plainly that it was even as a tooth out of his

of certain letters by my brother. He sent me copies of the letters, which I read attentively. I cancelled a few sentences or phrases, and returned the copies to Professor Minto, fully assenting to the publication of what remained. When the published book reached me, I was surprised to see in it this statement by my brother about his portrait painted by Mr. G. F. Watts. It appeared to me that one of two things was certain: first and most probable, that this passage had not been included in the copy-letters sent to me; second, that, if it had been so included, I must have marked it for excision. The fact is that this is one of the instances in which Mr. Scott does not quote a letter verbatim, but summarizes the contents of a letter, merely citing between inverted commas two or three of its clauses. He thus cites, for instance, the clause beginning “This resulted in my getting” etc. I infer therefore that Professor Minto did not regard this as a letter over which I had copyright authority, and so did not send me a copy of it—failing to reflect that I had such authority over (at any rate) those passages which are cited between inverted commas. Admitting this explanation, the Professor (on whose memory I would not willingly cast any reproach) only committed a venial oversight. On any other assumption, his error would be a somewhat grave one.

jaws.<sup>1</sup> Now that I have got it, I really think it very fine, and am quite ashamed to have played him such a trick.’”

My brother's contrition may count for something in extenuation of his trick—which consisted in obtaining from the highly-distinguished painter a portrait (in reality painted towards the summer of 1870) which, I presume, had been all along intended by its author to stand as Rossetti's property in case he liked to claim it, and in tendering as equivalent a chalk-drawing, which one may suppose to have been of considerably less commercial value. Most likely the reader, in perusing this item of Mr. Scott's book, infers also that my brother told a positive lie in saying that “he wanted the picture, *not for himself*.” This however is not the case. It is within my express knowledge that my brother did not retain the portrait beyond a certain interval, but consigned it to the person whom I have heretofore designated as Mrs. H. It never returned to his own possession, and formed no part of the estate which passed under his will. In 1883, after my brother's death, it was exhibited at the Royal Academy, not by any member of the family; and the exhibitor afterwards sold it to Mr. Leyland, with whose collection it was, I assume, disposed of some years later. I heartily wish that my brother had not “played such a trick,” prompted by the erroneous impression that the portrait did him very scanty justice; but one must not imagine that the trick was a veritable fraud. It was something between sharp practice and a boyish prank.

My brother's business-connexion with Mr. Howell became less necessary after his return to London; towards the close of the summer of 1876 it ceased, and all acquaintance with the vivacious Anglo-Portuguese ceased at the same time. Dante spoke to me on this subject more than once. His grounded complaint against Mr. Howell was not that the latter had directly wronged him in any money-transaction,

<sup>1</sup> This seems to be a humorous exaggeration. I possess Mr. Watts's letter, and do not discern in it what my brother speaks of.

but that he played fast and loose with his name in a manner which my brother found exceedingly embarrassing, and which might easily produce complications of a formidable kind. Howell would go to a person known both to himself and to Rossetti, and would obtain funds from that person, offering as security or equivalent certain drawings by Rossetti which, according to Howell, were already due to him for money disbursed. Mr. Valpy was more particularly affected by these Howellian manœuvres, and Mr. Clarence Fry, who became the purchaser of my brother's picture named *Venus Astarte*. Rossetti thus found himself liable to be called upon by the third party to hand in drawings which he had never engaged to the applicant, which he had no wish to deliver to him, and which perhaps were not due, as individual specimens, even to Howell himself. Such a position of risk and uncertainty was intolerable to Rossetti, who liked to have full control over his own affairs. There was also, in February 1876, a most vexatious affair in which a Mr. Levy intended to sue Howell for some matters, including a dress which (for artistic purposes) had passed into Rossetti's hands; and Rossetti, though wholly uninvolved in the real cause of action, chose, rather than appear in the witness-box, to pay a sum of £40 to Levy. Soon afterwards he parted company with Howell, and, spite of some pleadings from his old acquaintance, and some remains of good-will on his own part, he adhered unwaveringly to this resolve. They met no more.

In August 1878 my brother found that a drawing attributed to him had been bought at the shop of a London pawnbroker and art-dealer, and that other drawings of like character were obtainable at the same place. The first-named work was submitted to him for verification. He saw it to be spurious, and wrote to the *Times* to say so. There were other instances, both during his lifetime and after his death, in which productions to which he had never lifted a finger were put forward as being his. I will not lay any blame on Mr. Howell which is not proved to pertain to him—he is no longer here to defend himself; but it is a fact (previously

stated) that he was an ingenious facsimilist, and there was a lady of his acquaintance, known to my brother likewise, who was a capable artist; and many persons have, within my knowledge, formed and expressed the opinion that the imitation-Rossettis had their origin in that quarter. Certain it is that a good deal of misdirected activity was displayed by some person or persons working in this line.

I have more than once referred to the handsome scale of my brother's professional earnings. In 1879 and 1880 the picture-market was depressed, as well as some other markets; and these were two of his least successful years. He told me that in 1879 his income had been £1,030, whereas, two or three years before, it might be estimated at £3,000 per annum. However, even £1,030 is far from being greatly amiss; and he took such fluctuations placidly, without allowing them to add in any serious degree to his general tone of disquietude.

The death of two friends, and the painful condition of a third, engaged his sympathy and attention. James Hannay, his old intimate towards 1850, died suddenly, as British Consul at Barcelona, in 1873 (this was indeed while Rossetti was settled at Kelmscott); and a subscription was got up for the advantage of the family, and more especially the education of the children. My brother was one of the most liberal contributors, and was anxious to exert himself outside the limits of the subscription. John Lucas Tupper, the friend of the P.R.B. and *Germ* days, died in 1879, as Master of the Drawing-classes in Rugby School. Here again Rossetti came forward. James Smëtham, from being the most industrious as well as the most devout of painters, sank into a state of religious monomania, and was totally withdrawn, not only from the pursuit of his profession, but from almost every form of human intercourse. This lasted for several years, until death came to his relief. Rossetti took endless pains in promoting the sale of his pictures, and succeeded in adding a substantial sum to the funds needed by the highly estimable and woe-stricken family. It is no more than justice to my

brother to say that in any matter of this description his conduct was marked by sympathetic open-handedness in the first place, and—hardly less valuable—by genuine delicacy of method and by the most thorough good-nature. Long ago did the character of the “cheerful giver” obtain the highest form of praise.

Rossetti was urgently invited to become an exhibitor in the first year of the Grosvenor Gallery in Bond Street, 1877. He reflected on the proposal, conferred with Madox Brown and Burne-Jones, and finally declined. Brown likewise declined; Burne-Jones, as we all know, assented, and rapidly and rightly established a splendid reputation. Rossetti was now a painter of eminent performance and repute, about whom there was a great deal of public curiosity, and on these grounds of course had the invitation been based. He replied in a tone of great modesty, as shown by a draft-letter now before me:—

“What holds me back is simply the lifelong feeling of dissatisfaction which I have experienced from the disparity of aim and attainment in what I have all my life produced as best I could.”

He found occasion to write a letter to the *Times* in the same strain, 27 March 1877. There might be a good deal to say on this general subject. It is undoubtedly true that Rossetti, being a painter with high ideals in art, and an earnest desire to work in conformity to those ideals, was not contented with what he actually produced. He knew it to be good and skilful up to a certain point; but there was a loftier point to which his ideal and his conception reached, and which his hand had not reached. Few successful men would so ingenuously confess this to themselves, still less to others. Dissatisfied with the result himself, Rossetti thought that some other people would be dissatisfied also, and would make some ado in proclaiming their dissatisfaction; and, having undergone, with profound disrelish and permanent ill-effect, the inconveniences of a hullabaloo in relation to his poetry, he had no wish to encounter the like in relation to his painting. The fact is (as I have already intimated)

that Rossetti had, along with a great deal of pride, only a very small modicum of vanity or self-conceit, and, until his closing years, I might almost say not any. On his aspirations he relied implicitly ; on his performances—such as they were, and seeing that no better they might be—he rested. Fame he cherished ; for notoriety he cared not. That his name and his doings should be champ'd in the mouths of men was not among his desires. He apprehended that, while any shortcoming would be made much of by critics and spectators, the intrinsic and somewhat esoteric deservings of the work would be overlooked or belittled. Nor should it be forgotten that in all his later years he had a serious though fitful intention of collecting together on exhibition such specimens of painting and designing as he considered to come nearest to doing justice to his powers. He was a man who thought a great deal about “policy” in all such contingencies ; and very generally his views of policy were sound, as the event proved. In such a relation he did not regard anything as trivial, or deserving to be left to chance. It may be as well to add that, whenever any question arose of his exhibiting under fair or advantageous conditions, my own wish was that he should consent.

Not only with the Grosvenor Gallery, but in all instances when he was invited and pressed to exhibit, sometimes by owners of his pictures, my brother steadily refused. There was however one exception, perhaps only one. Mr. Turner, the purchaser of one of the two leading versions of the *Proserpine* subject, was, in the spring of 1878, a member of a Committee in Manchester for promoting the Art Schools Building-fund. He asked whether my brother would sanction the including of the *Proserpine* in an exhibition which was being organized for the Fund ; and my brother acquiesced, taking into consideration “the public object in view, one of the greatest importance to all interested in Art.” A few other cases in which his works were exhibited did from time to time occur ; but this was without his authority, and contrary to his liking. Even a letter from Sir Noel Paton—

whom, more than almost any other man, he would have liked to oblige—could not extort assent.

Another of my brother's not frequent communications to newspapers was made on 28 December 1878. The matter is really a very small one, notwithstanding the great rank and the personal charm of the lady concerned. It is recorded in Mr. Caine's *Recollections*, and perhaps it should not be left without some brief notice here. Some newspaper—I believe *The World*—chose to say that the Princess Louise, having called at Rossetti's house with a view to seeing his pictures, had been "rebuffed with a 'not at home,' and an intimation that he was not at the beck and call of Princesses." I cannot think that my brother was (as Mr. Caine says) "deeply moved by the imputation"; but he very properly considered that, being publicly charged with such ridiculous clownishness, he ought not to leave the falsehood undenied. So he wrote to the *Times* explaining that the Princess had never presented herself at his house; though she had, on two occasions at some years' interval, indicated an inclination to do so, and had in the second and quite recent instance been assured, by Mr. Theodore Watts, to whom she was speaking, that Rossetti would feel "honoured and charmed to see her." Rossetti concluded his letter by saying:—

"It is true enough that I do not run after great people on account of their mere social position, but I am, I hope, never rude to them; and the man who could rebuff the Princess Louise must be a curmudgeon indeed."

This remark defines very correctly his feeling in relation to such questions. He had a real liking for the ease and amenity which ordinarily go with birth and breeding, and to these he could respond with proportionate ease, and with an openness from which amenity was not excluded; but to take any trouble in hunting up social dignitaries, or in humouring them when found, was not at all his way. Mrs. Glasse's famous though perhaps legendary recipe did not define Rossetti's attitude towards the British aristocracy.

He neither caught his hare first, nor put it into his jug afterwards.

To his account of this incident of the visit which was not made, and the rebuff which was not administered, Mr. Caine adds:—

“At the very juncture in question Lord Lorne was suddenly and unexpectedly appointed Governor-General of Canada, and, leaving England, Her Royal Highness did not return until Rossetti's health had somewhat suddenly broken down, and it was impossible for him to see any but his most intimate friends.”

I question whether this is wholly accurate. It seems to me that Lord Lorne had been appointed some months before 28 December, the date of Rossetti's letter to the *Times*, and that the Princess was already in Canada before that date. She appears to have remained well-affected to Rossetti's memory, as a newspaper paragraph in December 1893 purported that she had sent to a sale of ladies' work “a book-cover for a volume of Rossetti's *Poems*, in green satin, with a design of clusters of pomegranates worked in shaded pinks and yellows,”—the title being in silver thread.

It was apparently towards the beginning of 1879 that a new intimacy of Rossetti's began—that with Mr. Hall Caine—which proved of great moment for his closing years. I might have more to say about it, but that Mr. Caine has himself given so many and such precise details in his *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (1882). It seems that Mr. Philip James Bailey, the author of *Festus*, was the person, casually encountered by Mr. Caine, who first roused in him an active interest in Rossetti's poetry. Mr. Bailey met my brother years previously, perhaps at Mrs. Gaskell's, but there was not at any time any real acquaintance between the two. Mr. Caine lectured twice or thrice in Liverpool, where he then resided, on the Poetry of Rossetti; and after a full year sent him the printed discourse, with which my brother was very much pleased, more especially on the ground of the lecturer's recognition of the moral or spiritual tone marking the poems.

A great deal of correspondence ensued, chiefly on poetic and other literary topics. The first personal meeting was in the autumn of 1880, when Mr. Caine came for a few days to London, and called by appointment in Rossetti's studio. He had been warned that he would "recognize the hole-and-cornerest of all existences in this big barn of mine." Since the time when he met my brother, and since that when he published his *Recollections*, Mr. Caine has had many a literary triumph; and my readers will probably be well pleased if I reproduce here his account of the impression which Rossetti gave him. I condense and interpolate at will.

"Very soon Rossetti came to me through the doorway in front, which proved to be the entrance to his studio. Holding forth both hands, and crying 'Hulloa,' he gave me that cheery hearty greeting which I came to recognize as his alone perhaps, in warmth and unfailing geniality, among all the men of our circle. It was Italian in its spontaneity, and yet it was English in its manly reserve; and I remember with much tenderness of feeling that never to the last (not even when sickness saddened him, or after an absence of a few days or even hours) did it fail him when meeting with those friends to whom to the last he was really attached. Leading the way into the studio, he introduced me to his brother, who was there upon one of the evening visits which, at intervals of a week, he was at that time making with unfailing regularity [at that time, and at all times afterwards while both Dante and I were in London, until his final departure for Birchington-on-Sea early in 1882: the practice began in October 1879, consequent upon some few days of great prostration which affected him after an overdose of chloral]. I should have described Rossetti at this time as a man who looked quite ten years older [this is wholly contrary to my own view] than his actual age, which was fifty-two; of full [slightly low] middle height and inclining to corpulence; with a round face that ought, one thought, to be ruddy, but was pale; large grey eyes with a steady introspecting look, surmounted by broad protrusive brows, and a clearly pencilled ridge over the nose, which was well cut, and had large breathing nostrils. The mouth and chin were hidden beneath a heavy moustache and abundant beard, which grew up to the ears, and had been of a mixed black-brown and auburn, and were now

streaked with grey [my brother's beard was of a darkish auburn—not I think at all black-brown, though that might, in mature age, be called the colour of his other hair]. The forehead was large, round, without protuberances, and very gently receding to where thin black curls, that had once been redundant, began to tumble down to the ears. The entire configuration of the head and face seemed to me singularly noble, and from the eyes upwards full of beauty. He wore a pair of spectacles, and, in reading, a second pair over the first; but these took little from the sense of power conveyed by those steady eyes, and that 'bar of Michelangelo.'<sup>1</sup> His dress was not conspicuous, being however rather negligent than otherwise, and noticeable, if at all, only for a straight sack-coat buttoned at the throat, descending at least to the knees, and having large pockets cut into it perpendicularly at the sides. This garment was, I afterwards found, one of the articles of various kinds made to the author's own design [and a most comfortable one it was]. When he spoke, even in exchanging the preliminary courtesies of an opening conversation, I thought his voice the richest I had ever known any one to possess. It was a full deep baritone, capable of easy modulation, and with undertones of infinite softness and sweetness, yet, as I afterwards found, with almost illimitable compass, and with every gradation of tone at command, for the recitation or reading of poetry. I perceived that he was a ready, fluent, and graceful talker, with a remarkable incisiveness of speech, and a trick of dignifying ordinary topics in words which, without rising above conversation, were so exactly though freely enunciated as would have admitted of their being reported exactly as they fell from his lips. Dinner being now over, I asked Rossetti to redeem his promise to read one of his new ballads. He responded readily, and, taking a small manuscript volume out of a section of the bookcase that had been locked, read us *The White Ship*. It seemed to me that I never heard anything at all matchable with Rossetti's elocution. His rich deep voice lent an added music to the music of the verse. It rose and fell, in the passages descriptive of the wreck, with some-

<sup>1</sup> This Tennysonian phrase evidently applies to the continuous eyebrow of Michelangelo. Mr. Caine must apply it either to the "broad protrusive brows" [eyebrows] of Rossetti, which were not however continuous, or to the "clearly pencilled ridge over the nose." In either case it does not seem to be quite accurately applied.

thing of the surge and sibilation of the sea itself. In the tenderer passages it was soft as a woman's, and in the pathetic stanzas with which the ballad closes it was profoundly moving."

I shall resist the temptation—though it is considerable—to extract in full, and discuss, various points raised in Mr. Caine's account of my brother—such as his views on several of his own poems; his "grudging Wordsworth every vote he gets"; his deference to Theodore Watts's opinions on questions of poetical execution; his enormous admiration of Chatterton (this was only in his last years, and I regarded it as not merely excessive but a trifle fanciful); his favourable opinion of William Watson as a poet then just beginning, and his kindly feeling, both literary and personal, to Joseph Skipsey the coal-miner poet, and his good friend Thomas Dixon the cork-cutter; his somewhat too copious contempt for some old-fashioned poets, "Addison, Akenside, and the whole alphabet down to Zany and Zero"; his axiom that "in painting there is, in the less important details, something of the craft of a superior carpenter" (quite sound, I think, though liable to be misconstrued); his praise of sonnets by Theodore Watts and by Bell Scott. There are a multitude of other details, all stimulating to any biographer coming into the field after Mr. Caine.

I cannot agree with that gentleman in his strong averment that "irresolution with melancholy lay at the basis" of Dante Rossetti's character. That Mr. Caine witnessed in him chronic melancholy and frequent irresolution is indeed indisputable; but that these qualities really were "at the basis of his character" I, from lifelong experience, am far from thinking. They developed in his later years, from a train of untoward circumstances, viewed through the fumes of chloral; but I cannot imagine that any one who knew Rossetti either throughout his career, or up to and a little after the age of about forty, would have said that he was marked by irresolution or severely tainted with melancholy. In all his earlier years, and beyond them too, he had that sort of

resolution which fashions a man's life upon his own lines, and not in subjection to the dicta or the promptings of any one else. He was imperative, dominant, self-sustained, and stiff-necked, and went straight to his mark. The sort of irresolution which Mr. Caine noticed was concerned with minor details—whether the terms of an appointment should be varied, whether he should adhere to a project of going out of town, and much of the like kind. No doubt, as his nerves and spirits were unstrung, so was his will seriously weakened in these years ; still I should not call him even then exactly what is meant by an irresolute man. As to melancholy, this also was not uppermost in his less advanced years. In any company in which he found himself he was generally the leading spirit, full of “go,” fertile in bracing and diverting sallies, and even jovial not infrequently. True, he was always to some extent moody, and liable to the overcloudings of gloom. He had a sufficiency of *mauvais quarts d'heure*, and was an initiate in the “nebular hypotheses” of life. Yet this did not amount to a character of which the basis was melancholy. The essential quality of his verse and of his art is, I conceive, not melancholy but poignancy. Certainly, by the time when Mr. Caine knew him personally—a period altogether of about a year and a half—these tendencies to sadness had ceased to be mere tendencies, and had merged into a settled habit of mind—settled, yet not unbroken ; for in appropriate company my brother could still command a variety of conversation, show cheerfulness, and make himself highly agreeable. Many a pleasant evening did I pass with him between the autumn of 1879 and that of 1881 ; I alone mostly, but my wife was often with me, especially towards the beginning of the last-named year, and he enjoyed her conversation—sensible, practical, and coloured by high thought and sympathy in the pictorial and the poetic arts. In the latter she was herself a considerable adept. Dante also was often full of kindly reminiscences from the old days, even those of our very early childhood.

The appropriate company, I am thankful to say, was not

wanting to him. Our mother and Christina took care to leave him not long unvisited ; and he never dropped the habit of calling at times upon them in the evening—these being now the only occasions when he left his house, with its large garden, which gave him some moderate amount of daily exercise after he had abandoned going out otherwise. This strict limitation to his house and garden may have begun (as I have already said) upon his return to London from Hunter's Forestall near the close of 1877, or possibly as soon as George Hake had left him, early in the same year. After Mr. Hake had departed there was Mr. Dunn in the house ; and, Dunn eventually ceasing to be a regular inmate, there was Mr. Caine. The latter, upon thus entering the Cheyne Walk house in July 1881, did indeed induce my brother to walk out with him in the evenings ; but this only lasted a week. Rossetti was naturally of a sociable turn. He liked to be in the company of persons for whom he had either a serious regard or a casual predilection ; and, reclusive though he became (after his return in 1874 from Kelmscott to London) under the influence of chloral, with its exaggerated fancies and morbid perturbations, he never enjoyed being alone. He grew to dislike and shun it extremely.

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased—  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow—  
Raze-out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart ?

"Therein the patient  
Must minister to himself."

But this was a patient who could not to himself minister any oblivious antidote—rather, grievous thought after thought, supposition after supposition of disquiet, and a nightmare of waking dreams. It became highly desirable therefore that his friends—and they were still by no means few, though Mr. Scott appears to have supposed that so they were—

should give him the mainstay of their frequent intercourse. I myself, in writing to Dante in August 1876, suggested whether he would not get his intimates, now one and now another, to call upon him, so that each evening might be provided with its friendly converse; and, when I began in October 1879 my regular series of weekly visits, I found that this plan was in steady operation. Besides myself, Mr. Watts had his appointed evening (and he very frequently saw my brother in other instances as well), and ~~so~~ had Mr. Shields. The other settled visitors were at that time—if my memory serves me—Mr. William Sharp, Mr. S. J. B. Haydon, and perhaps Mr. Scott. Mr. Sharp first came to my brother with a letter of introduction from Sir J. Noel Paton. This ensured him a welcome, which his own cordial pleasant ways, and his gift for poetry and other literary work, amply confirmed. In his visits to Rossetti he was accompanied every now and then by Philip Bourke Marston. Mr. Haydon had, towards 1850 to 1855, been slightly known to Rossetti as a sculptor. He was now a dealer in engravings and other works of art; and my brother met him on terms of much familiarity, finding a good deal to gossip over in the ins-and-outs of British art, present and past. Mr. Brown did not, I think, at any time take part in this settled once-a-week plan, but he saw Rossetti as opportunity allowed. He could not at any rate have joined in the plan after August 1881, as he then left London, and resided in or near Manchester, to attend to the very important commission which he had received—and for which he was better qualified, to my thinking, than any other man in the country—to paint the historico-local pictures in the Manchester Town Hall. I have here mentioned six persons who provided Dante with company for six days out of the seven. I do not remember that there was any seventh person regularly bespoken, but there *may* have been, or the vacant evening might very often be filled up by some engagement made for the purpose—as for instance with Boyce, Seddon, Tebbs, Burne-Jones, Hueffer, or Leyland. Another gentleman who rather frequently saw my brother, and was always welcomed

was Mr. William Davies, the author of *The Pilgrimage of the Tiber*, and other works, and of numerous dainty etchings. He was not however a constant resident in London. In 1893 Mr. Davies very kindly presented to me the letters which he had received from my brother, forming a small bound volume. That Dante Rossetti appreciated his friend's poetry appears from a letter (December 1873) in which he terms two of the compositions "full-toned and complete things," a third "charming in structure," a fourth and fifth "quite lovely and sustained poems."

And so my brother jogged along, more than sufficiently depressed in his own mind and feelings, but cheered by friendly conversation and attentions, and always (it must be remembered) as diligent in his art-work as he had ever been. Moreover, early in 1880, his literary activity revived. He paid not a little attention to the new edition of Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*, and produced some of his very best poetical work. In brief, chloral had little or no power over that part of his mind which was purely intellectual or inventive, but only over that other part which was emotional, and was applied to the construing of himself and his surroundings.

### XXXVIII.

#### *PAINTINGS AND POEMS, 1874-81.*

IN Section XXXV. I have referred to two of the pictures which occupied Rossetti in these years—*The Blessed Damozel*, and the replica of *Dante's Dream* for Mr. Graham, on a scale, though not small, considerably less large than the original work; *La Pia*, begun several years earlier than these, was also brought to completion. It is probably true, as stated by Mrs. Wood (though I am not clear where she got the information), that the predella of *The Blessed Damozel*, where the heart-stricken lover is represented in a sylvan scene, was painted from the beechwoods near Broadlands. This, the principal version of *The Blessed Damozel* composition, was

owned by Mr. Graham. A somewhat less elaborate version was eventually purchased by Mr. Leyland. The double predella of the reduced *Dante's Dream* was designed and painted without actual recourse to the living model; my brother—whose views upon some questions of art modified as he grew older—having come to the conclusion that the treatment would thus possess more unity and self-consistency of design.

The year 1875 produced *La Bella Mano*, a lady washing her hands, attended by boy-Cupids; and, in point of forcible, rich, and harmonious execution, this may be regarded as one of the very best of Rossetti's paintings. The *Venus Astarte* (or *Astarte Syriaca*) was going on from 1875 to 1877—a good deal of the work being painted at Aldwick Lodge. It is obviously one of my brother's most rapt and abstract works, and he considered it (not without fair grounds) nearly or quite the best; but popular taste has pronounced otherwise, and the picture is regarded as somewhat strained, and gloomy in ideal and in colouring. Of all his productions, it was the greatest money-success. Mr. Howell the not easily resistible secured for it a commission from Mr. Clarence Fry (of the Photographing Firm) at the large price of £2,100. Another of his vigorous strokes was getting Mr. Valpy to buy, at its original price of £1,575, the larger *Dante's Dream*, after this had been resigned by Mr. Graham. It might almost be said that Howell "planted" the spacious canvas upon Valpy, who shortly protested that so considerable a venture did not suit his purse-strings; but the thing was done, and was not to be undone. In the same years, 1875 to 1877, was painted for Mr. Leyland *The Sea-spell*, for which the title first proposed had been Coleridge's couplet—

"A damsel with a dulcimer  
In a vision once I saw."

Later on came the *Mnemosyne* (called also *La Ricordanza*, or *The Lamp of Memory*); a duplicate *Beata Beatrix*, left unfinished by Rossetti, and after his death completed by Madox Brown (it is now in the Art Gallery of Birmingham);

*A Vision of Fiammetta*, for which Mrs. Stillman was so good as to sit; *La Donna della Finestra* (or *The Lady of Pity*, from the *Vita Nuova*), bought, as was also *La Bella Mano*, by Mr. F. S. Ellis; and *The Daydream*, a lady musing, seated in the fork of a sycamore-tree. This, like the *Venus Astarte*, was one of Rossetti's largest pictures, purchased by an acquaintance of several years' standing, Mr. Constantine Ionides.

There were also some crayon and pencil drawings—*The Sphinx* (pencil), where three men, a youth, a full adult, and a greybeard, are shown as coming to consult the Sphinx on the mystery of existence—the youth dies ere he can put his question (the premature doom of Oliver Brown was in the artist's mind as to this point); *The Spirit of the Rainbow*, which belongs to Mr. Watts, and illustrates (so Mr. Sharp says) a sonnet written by Watts himself; *Perlascura*, which was autotyped; *Desdemona's Death-song*; *Sancta Liliās*; a portrait of Mr. Leyland, as a wedding-present to his daughter, Mrs. Hamilton; and the design of *The Sonnet*, illustrating a sonnet of my brother's on that form of poetical composition, so often treated by himself. Only one water-colour seems to call for mention—*Bruna Brunelleschi*, which was a head of Mrs. Morris, 1877.

A few special remarks may be needed regarding these various works. *The Sea-spell* was to serve as a pendant to the *Veronica Veronese*, already owned by Mr. Leyland, and it presents an inverse to the motive of that picture. Veronica finds in the note of a canary an incentive to a musical invention; whereas the Siren of the *The Sea-spell* charms a bird into the magic of her lay. The *Vision of Fiammetta* exhibits Boccaccio's lady, with her head encircled (as in that writer's text) by a mystical flame, and parting with her hand the bloom-laden boughs of an apple-tree. This brilliant joyous picture has proved a great favourite among Rossetti's works. In 1888 it sold by auction for £1,207, although its purchaser, Mr. Turner, had obtained it for £840. *The Daydream* was painted with the most conscientious attention and effort. After my brother had completed the head so as to

satisfy most eyes, he decided that it was not good enough for himself. He painted it out entirely, and did it over again. Mr. Shields, who was very constantly in Rossetti's studio at this period, goes so far as to say that he changed a full half of the picture. The pains were not misbestowed, for this—the latest of his considerable works that was fully completed—ranks also among the best.

As to the drawing of *The Sphinx* I must once again have recourse to Mr. Scott's book. As my reader will perceive, this takes us to a date rather more advanced than that which my narrative has yet reached.

“When our time came for returning to town [I understand the date indicated to be towards the middle of November 1881—at any rate between 17 October and 11 December], I was shocked to find the dear old Gabriel prostrate on the old sofa we had so often in the earlier times seen filled with the most genial friends. He was, it now appeared to me, going down fast; but I tried to keep up the usual deception we apply to invalids. I had gone alone, thinking it best to make this first visit so; but he was by himself, no one attending or trying to cheer the man whose spirits were down to zero. [Under ordinary circumstances Mr. Caine would have been in the house, but he *may* have been casually absent, lecturing in Liverpool.] When he and I were alone [this phrase seems odd, for the previous statement is that they two had been alone from the first], he wept and complained, and made unkind speeches, or showed me things he thought would wound me; as when he made his servant lay before me a large chalk sketch he called *Questioning the Sphinx*. [I think the fixed title of the design was simply *The Sphinx*, or else *The Question*: I know it as a pencil drawing, rather fully elaborated, and have not any recollection of a chalk sketch.] This wounded me, because it happened that I had made an illustration, in my first issue of *The Year of the World* (that juvenile ‘poem with a purpose’), of the hero traveller leaning on an augural staff with his ear to the mouth of a Sphinx, which I called by that name, and which the beloved D. G. R. of that early time used to make game of, as if I had mistaken the ancient fable in which the Sphinx was the questioner, not the questioned. [This seems to me to exhibit a very strange state of feeling on Mr. Scott's part. He was

"wounded" because Rossetti produced to him in 1881 a drawing, executed in or about 1875, bearing in subject-matter some, though not any very direct, analogy to a little woodcut design which Scott had published in 1846, and had not even reproduced in a later issue of his poem.] I had besides written a poem called *To the Sphinx considered as the Symbol of Religious Mystery* [yes, and a very fine poem it is in essentials; but why the writing by Scott of such a poem, published in 1854, should in any way debar Rossetti from producing towards 1875, and showing to his old friend in 1881, a design containing a Sphinx, remains to me almost as great a mystery as the Sphinx itself].<sup>1</sup> Lying on the sofa dying as he was, I saw that singular expression of ferocity [see Section XXX.] that used to take possession of his face if he surmised a quarrel was coming. I laid the sketch aside, but he kept staring at me. I refused to take up the gauntlet, and I could not venture to speak of the sketch itself, the style of drawing being so bad as to show his illness was destroying his work." [The style of drawing—the treatment of the nude—in this design (which is tolerably well-known in a photographed form, and which, as aforesaid, was produced not late in 1881, when "illness was destroying his work," but some six years earlier) does certainly not display the learned energy of a Michelangelo or a David, nor the suave accomplishment of a Leighton. If one were to pit it against Mr. Scott's little "illustration of the hero traveller" etc., the verdict might go in the contrary direction.]

I leave it to the reader to judge whether the spirit shown in the foregoing extract is or is not such as might have been expected from its author with regard to his "dearest of friends and most interesting of men," whom he well perceived to be then "dying," and who was dead long before the *Autobio-*

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Sharp was perhaps prompted by Mr. Scott to say (p. 241 of his book on Rossetti) that my brother's design "is, as the few intimate friends at this date are aware, indebted for suggestion to the fine poem by Mr. William Bell Scott called *The Sphinx*, where—for the first time, if I am not mistaken—questions are propounded to the Sphinx, instead of the latter being the mystic questioner in riddles." This statement is wholly fallacious. In Mr. Scott's poem not a single question of a substantial kind is propounded to the Sphinx, and only one question by way of rhetorical device.

*graphical Notes* were put into form for publication. Curious indeed are the lurking-places and blind corners in the heart of man. Expressions occur in this extract which seem dictated by genuine affection, and so I believe they were, for Scott was a man capable of true friendship, as no one knows better than myself; and other expressions which look as if they were incompatible with anything save a resolute desire to disparage and besmirch. But I will for the present leave "dear old Gabriel prostrate on the old sofa—going down fast and dying"—and resume what has to be said about his works of art up to the earlier portion of 1881.

*Desdemona's Death-song* was a subject highly germane to my brother's sympathies and his powers. He was greatly bent upon making a picture of it, and designed it in two or three varying compositions; and it seems more than likely that, had he succeeded in producing the painting, the public liking of it would have surpassed that for almost any of his other works. But he was not destined to make a beginning in colour. *Bruna Brunelleschi* was his last water-colour (except a *Proserpine* replica), and was also one of his best.

To this record of Rossetti's art-work I may add that Mr. Haydon made towards 1880 an etching of the old design of *Hamlet and Ophelia*, doing it with skill and with great fidelity, but rather heavy-handedly. My brother preferred that it should not be published, and the copper remains in my hands. After all this lapse of years it might be quite as well to publish the etching some day.

Mr. Caine gives a rather singular account of how Rossetti was induced to resume poetical composition, of which he had done nothing considerable since 1871. The friend of whom he speaks is clearly Mr. Theodore Watts. I cannot remember having heard of the circumstances otherwise than through Mr. Caine's narrative, but this I assume to be substantially correct:—

"After one of his most serious illnesses, and in the hope of drawing-off his attention from himself, and from the gloomy forebodings which in an invalid's mind usually gather about his own

too absorbing personality, a friend prevailed upon him, with infinite solicitation, to try his hand afresh at a sonnet. The outcome was an effort so feeble as to be all but unrecognizable as the work of the author of the sonnets of *The House of Life*; but, with more shrewdness and friendliness (on this occasion) than frankness, the critic lavished measureless praise upon it, and urged the poet to renewed exertion. One by one, at longer or shorter intervals, sonnets were written; and this exercise did more towards his recovery than any other medicine, with the result besides that Rossetti eventually regained all his old dexterity and mastery of hand. Encouraged by such results, the friend went on to induce Rossetti to write a ballad; and this purpose he finally achieved by challenging the poet's ability to compose in the simple, direct, and emphatic style which is the style of the ballad proper, as distinguished from the elaborate, ornate, and condensed diction which he had hitherto worked in [it would be more correct to say "which he had *generally* hitherto worked in," for there were instances to the contrary—such as *Stratton Water*]. Put upon his mettle, the outcome of this second artifice practised upon him was that he wrote *The White Ship*, and afterwards *The King's Tragedy*."

Perhaps the incident of the ill-concocted sonnet belongs to the year 1878, when Rossetti did in fact write some verses—I presume a sonnet—about Cyprus, of all places in the world. He knew and cared nothing about Cyprus, nor about Lord Beaconsfield's supposed stroke of policy in securing in that year the administration of the Island, and the sonnet could thus hardly escape being a bad one. Mr. Watts undertook to send the sonnet to the *Athenæum*, but withdrew it on the alleged ground that the *Pall Mall Gazette* contained another poem on the same theme—a reason which always looked to me odd, and which may now yield to the more cogent reason that the sonnet was a visibly bad one. My brother did afterwards write several good sonnets—as for instance, in April 1880, *The Song-throe* ("By thine own tears thy song must tears beget"), and, in February 1881, the sonnet for his picture named *Found*. He sent two others in January 1881 to Christina, with the dismal message—"With me, sonnets mean

insomnia." I think the trio of sonnets entitled *True Woman* may have been the very latest of his printed works, produced before 15 September 1881. On his death-bed he finished (as I mentioned before) his old ballad of *Jan van Hunks*, and produced two sonnets on the Sphinx subject. These three compositions, which he presented as a gift to Mr. Watts, remain as yet unpublished.

The important ballad of *The White Ship* was composed chiefly in 1880; it was finished towards the end of April in that year. Some scraps of it had however been written "long ago," as my brother told me. The still more important—but I think certainly not superior—ballad of *The King's Tragedy* may have been completed before the spring of 1881 had well begun. This also had been undertaken some while before the writing of it was attended to with regularity. The work strained him severely. "It was as though my own life ebbed out with it," he said to Mr. Caine.

## XXXIX.

## DANTE'S DREAM—BALLADS AND SONNETS.

MR. HALL CAINE was destined to be the last house-mate of Dante Rossetti in Cheyne Walk. In the spring of 1881 he spent a week with him by invitation; and in July of that year he took up his regular abode in the house. This was naturally at my brother's urgency. Mr. Caine, from the experience which he had now had of Rossetti's habits, low spirits, and fitful impressibility, viewed the adventure not without some apprehension; and it would be vain to deny that, spite of his sincere admiration of Rossetti's intellect and its products, and his warm personal regard, he found the position a somewhat trying one. He had free quarters and board in the house, and was not bound to look after my brother otherwise than as friendship and kind feeling should dictate. He had now launched out on the literary profession, and necessarily wanted to have the majority of his time at his own

disposal. But Rossetti's gifts and his temperament always made him a leader in any associateship, and now his infirmities reinforced the claim ; and Mr. Caine was soon drawn within a vortex from which escape—unless he had decided to escape from the house altogether—was not easily manageable. His own work got impeded ; his days and evenings were cut up by numerous and miscellaneous attentions paid to his highly sensitive and not seldom morbidly wayward friend and host. If he looks back upon the months from July 1881 to April 1882 as a period of strain and self-sacrifice, he may at least console himself with the reflection that he did a great deal to soothe and tend a man of eminent genius and wide renown, and that he amply earned the gratitude of those members of the family who survived Dante Rossetti.

When the arrangement for Mr. Caine's settling in the house was definitely fixed, Rossetti gave notice to Mr. Dunn—then in his native city of Truro—that he would not again be required as an inmate ; and Mr. Dunn, on returning to London, took lodgings of his own in Chelsea. He still received some artistic employment from Rossetti ; and, after the death of the latter, he accommodated me by taking charge of the house and keeping things straight until the sale of the numerous effects was held in July, and for some little while afterwards.

The year 1881 was really one of conspicuous success and even triumph for Rossetti, as both painter and poet ; but not all this availed to “minister to the mind diseased”—or “dis-cased,” as we might more appropriately write the word for the immediate purpose. He sold his large picture of *Dante's Dream* to the Public or Municipal Gallery of Liverpool, the Walker Art-Gallery ; and he produced, amid lavish applause, his new volume of poetry, *Ballads and Sonnets*, as well as a modified reissue of his old volume named *Poems*. The *Dante's Dream* had now for some while been back in my brother's studio, owing to the decision of its second purchaser, Mr. Valpy, to leave London and reside in Bath ; and Rossetti induced Valpy to re-consign it to him, with an undertaking

that he would eventually supply other works to an equal and indeed a higher money-value. I have made some previous brief allusion to this affair.

Whatever credit may be due for the first suggestion of the sale-and-purchase transaction with Liverpool has to be assigned to Mr. Caine, followed up by his friendly and zealous good-offices, and his tact in conducting a sometimes rather thorny negotiation. He it was who, in December 1880, wrote to Rossetti, from Liverpool, saying that, as Alderman Samuelson had then succeeded another gentleman—whom I shall term Mr. R.—as director of the gallery, a chance seemed to have opened for bringing the sale to bear. Alderman Samuelson did in fact prove a steady and even strenuous friend to the project. In March 1881 he proposed to call on Rossetti, and look at the picture. But it so happened that Mr. R. was to be in his company ; and this was supremely distasteful to Rossetti, for a reason which he notified thus in a letter to Mr. Samuelson :—

“ Mr. R. thought fit some time ago to express himself, when presiding at a public lecture, in the worst possible form of disparagement respecting me and my art.” And, as to his proposing to enter the house, “ I need hardly say that no question of interest could induce me to waive such an objection.”

This affair of Mr. R.'s observations at the lecture was for a long while a sore point with Rossetti, who understood that the remarks in question had involved a recurrence to the old “ Fleshly School ” imputations upon his *morale* in the arts. He may have taken an exaggerated view of the facts, or may have felt unduly touchy concerning them ; but many persons would probably agree with me in commending his high spirit, which would neither bend nor break, and which made him count as dross the coin which—in a business affair that he had very much at heart on various grounds—might have been earned with some tarnish to his self-respect.

Alderman Samuelson was thus brought to a standstill for a time ; but he proposed anew to make a call, accompanied

by two other members of the committee, Mr. Bower and Mr. Galloway. This was done, and all three were of one mind, in favour of the purchase. Still Mr. R. had to be dealt with, for his was an influential voice, without which nothing could be securely effected. In July, after seeing and admiring the smaller *Dante's Dream* in the house of Mr. Graham, he wrote to my brother, saying that his remarks at the lecture had been misunderstood or misreported, and that he would like the purchase to come off, and would yet call if authorized to do so. After such a disclaimer, any further obstruction on Rossetti's part would have been an act of mingled obduracy and weakness—and indeed he was bound to accept, as a gentleman, the denial of fact tendered to him in a gentlemanly spirit. So he made an appointment for Mr. R. to call. The call was made, and Mr. R. also pronounced in favour of the purchase. My brother, in view of the probable sale, had already made some modifications in the picture. He positively declined however to send it to the annual exhibition in Liverpool, unless on the clear understanding that it was, to all intents and purposes, sold to the permanent Art-Gallery, and could not under any conditions be returned on his hands. At one time, in the beginning of August, he concluded that this understanding had failed ; but it was immediately renewed. The picture was sent off on the 16th of the month, and at the private view it stood marked as sold. The price he wanted was his own old price, £1,575. To allow of his receiving this sum unabated, the amount was fixed at £1,650, thus providing for the usual commission to the exhibiting body upon a work sold out of the Exhibition. Mr. Caine would no doubt have been too high-minded to urge any claim of his own on account of his first suggestion, and the great pains he had taken in the matter ; but Rossetti, at an early date, proposed to compensate him with a sum of £150, and this I presume was done. He also got Alderman Samuelson to accept a crayon-study for the head of Dante in the painting—one of his finest works of this class.

Thus, with marked success, terminated the sale of Rossetti's

largest picture, which continues to form one of the principal features of the Walker Art-Gallery. The purchase being now effected, it became incumbent on my brother to see about executing and delivering the various works which he had undertaken to hand over to Mr. Valpy after the purchase, as an equivalent for the *Dante's Dream*. He made no delay in setting to work upon them. But his health was rapidly failing, only some months of shattered life remained to him, and the tale of work was far from being completed at the date of his death. Mr. Valpy had of course a claim for a solid money-payment instead, and this was made in due course. The like was the case with Mr. Graham, in relation to the still unfinished picture *Found*, begun as far back as 1854. It may be as well to add that this picture would undoubtedly have been brought to completion some months before Rossetti's death, but for an unfortunate demur on the part of Mr. Graham himself, who wanted to cumulate upon the *Found* certain payments in advance which he had made partly upon that work, and partly upon another work not yet begun in colour but only schemed out in monochrome, *The Boat of Love* (from the *Vita Nuova*). He now wished to abandon *The Boat of Love* altogether. To this Rossetti was entitled to object, and he did object; though, in the instance of so old and proved a friend, with very great reluctance.

My brother's volume of 1870, the *Poems*, went through six editions. Towards the beginning of 1879 it was out of print, and no further issue of it appeared. He made about £700 by it altogether. By March 1881 he had determined to re-print the *Poems* in a somewhat altered form; and to follow it up by a separate volume, containing *Rose Mary*, *The White Ship*, *The King's Tragedy*, *The House of Life* in a completed form, and various other compositions. But very soon afterwards he decided to reverse the process, and bring out first the new *Ballads and Sonnets*, and then in close sequence the revised *Poems*. Into the latter—to compensate for the removal of the original and unfinished *House*

of *Life*—some fresh work was introduced; especially the uncompleted yet rather long poem, chiefly of very early years, named *The Bride's Prelude*. Before the end of March the copy for *Ballads and Sonnets* was sent to the printer, to be published by Messrs. Ellis & White. This liberal firm offered for it the same terms as for the volume of 1870—a royalty of 25 per cent., to be paid down as soon as the book should be published, without waiting for actual sale. For the re-issued *Poems* the terms were to be a like royalty, but only accruing in proportion as sales were effected. As in the previous instance, I assisted my brother with the proofs. The *Ballads and Sonnets*, very properly dedicated to Mr. Watts, were fully in print by 16 September, and various copies were distributed. The full publication ensued on 17 October. The book was a thorough success, for by the 25th of the latter month the first edition of 1,000 copies was exhausted; and before the end of November 2,000 copies altogether had been issued and paid for. Rossetti wished to write two other historical ballads: *Joan of Arc*, for which he took some preparatory steps; and the *Death of Abraham Lincoln*, which was intended to include a tribute to another great American, John Brown, the "faithful unto death"; also, according to Mr. Sharp, *The Death Ride of Alexander III. of Scotland* (1286). Of this I remember nothing, nor does the subject seem to supply much material for a ballad. The *Poems*, in their revised form, came out likewise in 1881. This volume sold of course less rapidly, but continuously until some while after my brother's decease.

Critics were laudatory, some of them enthusiastic; and, so far as memory serves me, there was no repetition of abuse at all resembling *The Fleshly School of Poetry*, or even following on the same lines. "Live it down" is a very sound axiom. My brother had lived it down, and might from the first have been sure that he would do so. But, unhappily for himself and all others concerned, he had supposed that the influence of detraction and fallacy is much greater than it really is, and

the votaries of those powers much more numerous than in fact they are.

Painful to say, no scintilla of pleasure or of cheerfulness seemed to come to Dante Rossetti from his double achievement in 1881. He was of course, in a faint way, gratified that his leading picture was sold to a public institution, and that his poetry was, by a renewed experiment, recognized as an honour to our period. He sometimes expressed to me—and he did so particularly in February 1880—a much higher value for his poetical than for his pictorial work. But the curtains were drawn round his innermost self, and the dusk had closed over him, and was fast darkening into night. Not for the applause of a big or a little crowd had he worked all his life long, rather for adequate self-expression and attainment in art. The work was done, but—except in a remote or abstracted sense—it did not prove to be its own exceeding great reward.

## XL.

### *CUMBERLAND AND LONDON—FINAL ILLNESS.*

THAT Dante Rossetti's health was really and very seriously undermined in and before 1881 is a fact now too palpable for discussion, for his life came to an end in April 1882. People who thought that it was "all fancy," or the nervous apprehensions of a hypochondriac, were under a mistake. But it is true that his uneasy imagination did at times suggest to him—at any rate in his later years—that something particular was going wrong, when in fact there was little or no solid cause for disquietude. I have heard of more than one instance in which, on hearing about the symptoms of a disease affecting some one else, he forthwith proceeded to suppose that he himself was subject to the same malady. Mr. Caine relates a curious circumstance, which deserves a little reflection.

It appears that at some time in 1879, before Mr. Caine had made personal acquaintance with Rossetti, some troublesome

attack of ill-health befell Mr. Caine himself, then in Liverpool. He wrote of it to Rossetti, and the latter, never deficient in sympathy, replied as follows:—

“I was truly concerned to hear of the attack of ill-health you have suffered from, though you do not tell me its exact nature. I hope it was not accompanied by any such symptoms as you mentioned before. I myself have had similar symptoms (though not so fully as you describe), and have spat blood at intervals for years; but now think nothing of it—nor indeed ever did—waiting for further alarm-signals which never came.”

Mr. Caine then says of Rossetti (apparently in 1881) that

“Upon the periodical recurrence of the symptom, he never failed to become convinced that he spat arterial blood, and that on each occasion he had received his death-warrant. Proof enough was adduced that the blood came from the minor vessels of the throat.”

This, especially as contrasted with Rossetti's own quoted words, seems a little exaggerated in expression; but on that I need not dwell. Mr. Caine next proceeds to state that “during the two or three weeks preceding our departure for Cumberland in the autumn of 1881, during the time of our residence there, and during the first few weeks after our return to London, Rossetti was afflicted by a violent cough,” which our author regarded as aggravated “by a conscious giving way to it.” I remember at that period, and at one or two others, this matter of the cough; and I am quite at one with Mr. Caine in thinking that it could have been considerably controlled by my brother if he had chosen; but for one reason or another he appeared to me to prefer giving it the freest course. Then comes Mr. Caine's narrative of a particular incident, which probably pertains to about the middle of November:—

“He told me that during the night of my absence, in the midst of one of his bouts of coughing, he had discharged an enormous quantity of blood. ‘I know this is the final signal,’ he said, ‘and I shall die.’ I did not” (adds Mr. Caine) “hold the promise I gave

him as to secrecy sufficiently sacred, or so exclusive, as to forbid my revealing the whole circumstance to his medical attendant. I may add that from that moment the cough entirely disappeared."

All this about the blood-spitting "at intervals for years"—not to speak of the superabundant coughing—sounds odd, and perhaps some of my readers will suppose it was mere fantasy or semi-conscious imposture on Rossetti's part. And yet I believe it was real in its degree. As far back as November 1871 (which was some months before the appearance of the Buchanan pamphlet, and therefore before any obvious disturbance of his mental equilibrium) he told me that he had brought up blood that day, and had done so earlier in the year at Kelmscott, which was prior to the appearance even of the article in the *Contemporary Review*; and he made a similar statement at the beginning of April 1872. However, I have not the least reason to think that his lungs were, from first to last, otherwise than sound.

The departure for Cumberland, mentioned by Mr. Caine, took place on 17 September 1881. Mr. Caine was thoroughly familiar with the Vale of St. John, near Keswick; and, as it seemed highly desirable that Rossetti should have some break in the monotonous course of his existence, and rouse himself from habitual and increasing dejection, he was prevailed upon to join Caine in an expedition to the Cumberland solitude, at the Legberthwaite end of the Vale. As the Family-letters show, this change seemed, at the first blush, not a little beneficial; but soon, under the malign influence of chloral, with its accompanying whiskey, "the last state of that man was worse than the first." Mr. Caine has given some depressing details, which I need not draw upon here—the sum of the whole being that the change proved visibly harmful. Rossetti at last expressed a wish to return to London. He was back on 17 October. As he re-entered his now gloomy but accustomed and still cherished house, he exclaimed, as Mr. Caine has recorded—"Thank God! home at last, and never shall I leave it again." He was indeed to

leave it once more, but only as the latest stage towards his final resting-place.

On 24 October I received his letter saying that he was "very ill." I went round, and found him in much the same state as in October 1879. A nurse was called in, who left him towards the beginning of November. On the 27th of that month another nurse came, and none too soon, and one rule strictly enforced was that my brother should go to bed by nine o'clock. By 21 November I observed him to be somewhat less shaken in health, but deeply melancholy. Matters of very old as well as more recent date agitated his mind; even so old as the year 1847 or 1848, when his desultory habits of work, or lack of filial deference, used to annoy our father, and elicit some severe expressions from him. It must, I think, have been immediately after 21 November that an incident occurred, related at some length by Mr. Bell Scott. It is singular in itself, and highly symptomatic of my brother's then condition of mind and spirits, and I shall extract the passage as it stands, only omitting some observations which, without being irrelevant, are not quite to the immediate purpose.

"A new idea had taken possession of his mind, which caused us painful agitation ["us" would be Scott and Miss Boyd, and I suppose some others, especially Shields and Watts: I cannot affirm however that Miss Boyd was present on the occasion referred to, nor who else was either present or in fact painfully agitated]. He wanted a priest to give him absolution for his sins! I mention this hallucination [I cannot see that it was a hallucination, though it may have been a weakness] as I have related previous ones; for example, that of the chaffinch on the highway so long ago as 1869 [see Section XXX.]—not loving him the less but the more, sympathizing with him almost mesmerically. But the æsthetic side of anything was his exclusive interest. In poetry and in painting the mediæval period of history was necessary to him [this, in its primary sense, is remote indeed from the fact]. At first no one took any notice of this demand for a confessor. We thought his mind wandering, or that he was dreaming. But on its earnest repetition,

with his eyes open, I for one put him in mind of his not being a papist, and of his extreme agnosticism. 'I don't care about that,' was his puzzling reply. 'I can make nothing of Christianity, but I only want a confessor to give me absolution for my sins.' This was so truly like a man living or rather dying in A.D. 1300 that it was impossible to do anything but smile. Yet he was serious, and went on: 'I believe in a future life. Have I not had evidence of that often enough? Have I not heard and seen those that died long years ago? What I want now is absolution for my sins, that's all.' 'And very little too,' some outsider in the room whispered, as a gloomy joke [I have no idea who this outsider could have been: did Mr. Scott possibly mean Mr. Caine? It is exceedingly unlikely that, during such a conversation as this, my brother would have had in the room any person whom he himself regarded as an outsider]. None of us, the deeply interested few who heard him, could answer a word."

To this narrative—to the general authenticity of which I lend full credence—I must add yet a few observations. On the occasion to which I lately referred, 21 November, when I was alone with my brother, he certainly showed very great trouble of mind—the kind of trouble which, had he been a Roman Catholic, he would at once have imparted to a priest in confession, receiving in return admonition, advice, and probably some large amount of consolation. He must then have raised—or gone very near to raising—this question of a Catholic priest. I say Catholic, because, although he had been trained in the Anglican Church, such Christian sympathies as he had went entirely in the direction of Catholicism, and not in the least of Protestantism. Whatever may have been the precise terms in which he spoke to me, my reply was that, if he really felt any strong inclination that way, I, were I in his place, would assuredly act upon it; but that it would be no use seeing a priest unless he were firmly resolved to do what the priest should tell him to do, in the nature of religious observance, penance, and aught else. Were it possible for the like circumstances to arise again, I would still give the like advice; the question being, not what

my opinions are—and, as a fact, their current is totally opposite—but what a man can rationally do who feels a personal need of religious solace. If after this talk my brother still wanted “absolution for his sins,” the only really surprising thing is that he did not take steps for soliciting and procuring it. Here the other phase of his mind—that which regarded the mysteries of the universe as inscrutable—must have exercised the predominance.

Mr. Scott, it seems, urged upon Rossetti “his extreme agnosticism.” But Mr. Scott, in conceiving Rossetti to be an extreme agnostic, only took count of one half of his mind, often—it is true—in evidence. My brother was unquestionably sceptical as to many alleged facts, and he disregarded formulated dogmas, and the practices founded upon them. For theological *discussions* of whatsoever kind he had not the faintest taste, nor yet the least degree of aptitude. On the other hand, his mind was naturally prone to the marvellous and the supernatural, and he had an abiding and very deep reverence for the person of Christ. I recollect that one evening—it may have been late in 1879—he wound up a conversation with me on this subject by saying, in a tone of decisive conviction, “Certainly He was something more than man.” To pass from the belief of something superhuman in Christ to the admission of some more than human authority in a minister of Christ is a not very unaccountable step.

It will be seen that I am not here arguing that my brother was either reasonable or self-consistent in wishing to get “absolution for his sins”—he was not a man of self-consistency in either opinion or act; but only that, if one understands both sides of his mind, one can see how the notion arose, whereas, if one erroneously supposes him to have been simply and solely an “extreme agnostic,” there is no traceable line of connexion. When all is said, it must be added that the “absolution” had quite as much to do with chloral as with creed.

As to my brother’s reported assertion “I believe in a future life,” this was partially true at all periods of his career, and

was entirely true in his closing years.<sup>1</sup> It depended partly upon what we call "spiritualism," on many of whose manifestations he relied, while ready to admit that some others have been mere juggling. In November 1879 I found that his mind was much occupied with spiritualism, and that he was then fully convinced, or re-convinced, of immortality; and I am sure that from this belief he never afterwards receded. I cannot say with any accuracy what he supposed immortality to consist of. To all appearance his own surmises were but vague. I have little doubt however that, in the case of persons so faulty as he knew and acknowledged himself to be, yet not ignoble in faculty or aim, he credited neither immediate bliss after death nor irrevocable "damnation," but rather a period of purgation and atonement, with gradual ascent, comparable more or less to the purgatory of Roman Catholics. On this momentous subject I never saw him to be agitated, timorous, or mentally harassed. He seemed willing to accept his fate, such as some eternal decree might impose it.

Mr. Scott states also that Rossetti said—"Have I not heard and seen those that died long years ago?" Perhaps this is even verbally accurate; though I cannot recollect having myself ever heard my brother allege that he had *seen* a spiritual appearance, or what we term a ghost.

Perhaps the reader thinks that I have paid more attention than was needed to this transitory craving for "absolution for sins"; but, at some point or other of my narrative, it seemed requisite to say something about my brother's opinions—or I might rather say feelings—on questions of religion, and here the opportunity offered. His opinions on the subject were highly indefinite; his utterances often negative, sometimes positive; his interior and essential feelings, a mixture

<sup>1</sup> In my book entitled *Dante Gabriel Rossetti as Designer and Writer* (p. 261) I have called attention to twelve sonnets in *The House of Life* which bear upon the question of the destiny of the soul. Of these, eight indicate a belief in immortality; three a sense of uncertainty; one does not point clearly to anything.

of the two, coloured by passion and imagination, hazily distinguishable by himself, and by no means to be neatly ticketed by others. There is a very efficient phrase in Mr. Swinburne's review of Rossetti's *Poems* of 1870 which comes home to me as observably true: "Nor has he ever suffered from the distemper of minds fretted and worried by gnatstings and fleabites of belief and unbelief till the whole lifeblood of the intellect is enfeebled and inflamed." Or take Rossetti's own utterance in his short but well-pondered poem *Soothsay* (published in 1881):—

"Let lore of all Theology  
Be to thy soul what it *can* be;  
But know—the Power that fashions man  
Measured not out thy little span  
For thee to take the meting-rod  
In turn, and so approve on God  
Thy science of Theometry."

Mr. Caine regarded Rossetti as, "by religious bias, a monk of the middle ages." To this I only very partially assent. He may indeed have been so by "bias," but clearly not by implicit belief. If we could imagine "a monk of the middle ages" whose mind was in a mist as to religious doctrines, who conformed to no religious rites, practised no monastic austerities, and in profession and act led an anti-monastic life, we might obtain some parallel to Dante Rossetti. But such a personage would be very little of a monk, of the middle or of any ages. It would be more admissible to say that Rossetti was intrinsically a man of the middle ages, who, by innate bias and by the course of circumstances, might not unnaturally have been led to turn himself into a monk. In that condition he would have painted a great number of missals, written a verse-chronicle beginning with the Garden of Eden or the "earth without form and void," indited hymns as rapturous as those of Jacopone da Todi, exceeded in austerity, exercised a vast influence over his penitents, and perchance have become a Cardinal or a Pope—not indeed a

“pagan Pope,” but still one who thought his own thoughts under the cincture of the triple tiara.

From these large speculations I must return into the hushed atmosphere of 16 Cheyne Walk, and mention what were the latest art-productions of my brother.

In May 1881 his picture of *The Salutation of Beatrice*, commissioned by Mr. Leyland, was in progress. For this picture he hesitated for a while between the gracious type of Mrs. Stillman and the intense type of Mrs. Morris. Eventually he adhered to the latter. Spite of his shaken health, the work proved very fully up to his mark. It was not far from completed when he had to abandon the palette. After the great crisis of illness of which I shall next have to speak he resumed painting, though only to a minor extent, early in January 1882. For Mr. Valpy he nearly or quite finished a duplicate *Proserpine*, and brought well forward a duplicate *Joan of Arc*. There was also (but not so late as these) a *Donna della Finestra*, with magnolia-blossoms, which remained uncompleted.

No one had hailed the volume of *Ballads and Sonnets* with more energetic or more acceptable praise than Rossetti's friend now of long standing, Dr. Westland Marston. The evening of 11 December was fixed for this poet, and his blind poet-son Philip, to visit my brother. The only fourth person present was Mr. Caine, who relates the facts as follows :—

“For a while he [Rossetti] seemed much cheered by their bright society; but later on he gave those manifestations of uneasiness which I had learned to know too well. Removing restlessly from seat to seat, he ultimately threw himself upon the sofa in that rather awkward attitude which I have previously described as characteristic of him in moments of nervous agitation. Presently he called out that his arm had become paralysed, and, upon attempting to rise, that his leg also had lost its power. We were naturally startled; but, knowing the force of his imagination in its influence on his bodily capacity, we tried playfully to banish the idea. Raising him to his feet however, we realized that, from whatever cause, he had

lost the use of the limbs in question, and in the utmost alarm we carried him to his bedroom, and hurried away for Mr. Marshall. It was found that he had really undergone a species of paralysis—called, I think, loss of co-ordinative power. The juncture was a critical one; and it was at length decided, by the able medical adviser just named, that the time had come when the chloral, which was at the root of all this mischief, should be decisively, entirely, and instantly cut off. To compass this end, a young medical man, Mr. Henry Maudsley, was brought into the house as a resident, to watch and manage the case in the intervals of Mr. Marshall's visits. It is not for me to offer a statement of what was done, and done so ably, at this period. I only know that morphia was at first injected as a substitute for the narcotic the system had grown to demand; that Rossetti was for many hours delirious whilst his body was passing through the terrible ordeal of having to conquer the craving for the former drug; and that, three or four mornings after the experiment had been begun, he awoke calm in body and clear in mind and grateful in heart [this favourable result seems to me a little ante-dated]. His delusions, and those intermittent suspicions of his friends which I have before alluded to, were now gone, as things in the past of which he hardly knew whether in actual fact they had or had not been."

I will add here a few extracts from my own Diary. There are some others relating to my brother at this period, but of less import:—

"Wednesday, December 14. Called again to see Gabriel, having seen him also on Monday [the day following the attack]. He is in bed, suffering from a numbness along the left side generally—what might be regarded as paralytic numbness, but Marshall has assured Watts that it is not really paralytic. To me also Marshall spoke on Monday, partly in the same sense, but (to my thinking) less positively. [Then follow a few details, forestalled by Mr. Caine's narrative.] Of course Gabriel is not a little dispirited. Marshall is now very anxious to get rid of the chloral [it would appear therefore that chloral was not, as might be inferred from that narrative, abolished on the very night of the attack], and he proposes to inject morphia as a substitute. He was to have come to-day for the purpose, but did not. He also wants to put a young medical

man in charge, to take care that his plan is fully carried out. Watts is with Gabriel almost every day. This evening Jones also came, and was very affectionate, and promises to return as often as he may be wanted. On coming home I found Shields.

"Monday, December 19. Called on Gabriel. A young medical man, Maudsley, nephew of the celebrated doctor, is now in the house, and the system of injecting morphia near the wrist has been begun. The chloral is wholly discontinued, and the whiskey which accompanied it reduced to about a wineglass a day. Under this system Gabriel gets a fair moderate amount of sleep; but it is perturbed by painful opium-dreams, and the same impressions remain with him when awake. This was markedly the case to-day. Throughout the evening he was under all sorts of delusions of a more or less unpleasant character—seeing writings and printed sheets where none existed, replying to questions which were not asked, etc. Maudsley says that the real cause of these hallucinations is not the morphia but the cessation of the chloral, which seems to me odd. He re-affirms what Marshall said—that the numbness of the left side of the body is not really paralysis. This numbness seems slightly abated now, especially so far as the arm and hand are concerned.

"Thursday, December 22. Called round at Gabriel's, and spoke to Watts, Maudsley being absent at the time. Watts says that Gabriel was sleepless on Monday and Tuesday nights; but on Wednesday night, without either chloral or morphia administered, he got some five or six hours' sleep, and was this morning sensibly better; knew Watts, and conversed sensibly for the most part. The numbness may have diminished a little. I was not minded to see Gabriel, surmising that the best thing for him is to be left as quiet as possible; and in this Watts agreed with me."

Between the above date in my Diary, 22 December 1881, and the next ensuing date, 6 January 1882, I shall interpolate a professional memorandum by Mr. Maudsley, which I found among my brother's papers after his death. It is worded as follows:—

"Thursday, December 15-16.—90 grains of chloral and  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of brandy in 2 doses, at intervals of 4 hours, 9 p.m. and 1 a.m.—Friday [16] 4 minims of morphia at 9 p.m.; sleep 4 hours; restless

and craving for whiskey and chloral till 3 a.m. ;  $1\frac{1}{2}$  whiskey at 5 a.m. —Saturday [17] restless, but condition much better. At 9 p.m. 5 minims of morphia ; dozing and sleep for one hour, and quiet until 12. At 1 a.m. craving for whiskey and chloral ; 3 minims of morphia. At 2 a.m. doze for a short time ; then restless, craving for whiskey ; 2 oz. of whiskey at 4 a.m.—Sunday [18] horrible dreams ; restless until 9 a.m., then sleep for 2 hours ; delusions towards evening.—Monday [20] 9 a.m., 6 minims of morphia ; quiet sleep till 12. 1 a.m., restless, violent, and irritable ; delusions etc. ; 2 minims of morphia. Restless with delusions all day ; delusions etc., night.—Tuesday [21] 4 minims of morphia ; restless, no sleep, but quiet ; delusions. No chloral or whiskey.—Wednesday [21] ether and bromine ; quiet, delusions. No morphia ; sleep 8 hours.—Thursday [22] 3 minims of morphia at 9 p.m. ; sleep quiet ever since.”

My own Diary now resumes :—

“Friday, January 6, 1882. In the evening I went to Gabriel’s. He has for some days past been down in his studio, and the numbness in the left leg is now greatly diminished ; in fact he walks about the studio without any sort of assistance, and very much as before the attack. The left arm he still regards as in the same state and much the same degree of numbness. I suspect however that, by a proper exertion of will, he would find it not so very much amiss. Maudsley urges him to set his palette to-morrow, and see what he can do. Gabriel’s spirits are still extremely low—the uncertainty as to his being able to resume his profession as a painter weighing painfully upon him. I saw (copied out by Sharp) the verses ‘To an Old Enemy,’ which Buchanan has prefixed to his latest novel *God and the Man*. They are generally, and I think correctly, assumed to be addressed to Gabriel, and they certainly form a handsome retractation of past invidious attacks. Gabriel thinks the verses may really be intended for Swinburne [but I don’t believe that he long persisted in any such supposition].

“Friday, January 13. Evening with Gabriel. He can now make a *little* use of his left hand for helping himself at meals etc. ; and during the greater part of the evening he was conversible and fairly cheerful, though always much depressed when he speaks of his blighted professional prospects etc.

"Monday, January 23. Evening with Gabriel. He is now, I think, somewhat better, in body and mental tone combined, than at any time since his return from Cumberland; yet his spirits are still low, and his left arm partially numbed. Morphia—water." [This last jotting means that by this date the injections of morphia had been so far reduced that at last mere water was substituted; but my brother was not allowed to know that fact.]

Mr. Scott, in speaking of this attack of quasi-paralysis, says: "He was carried upstairs to bed, and never came down again." This, as will be seen from my Diary, is one more instance of a rooted habit of inaccuracy. My brother was carried upstairs on 11 December. He was down "some days" before 6 January (it was in fact on 29 or 30 December), and he continued coming down. Not only this, but he called in our mother's house, in Torrington Square, Bloomsbury, no less than four times between 14 January and 1 February. A fair inference from Mr. Scott's statement is that he can never have gone round from his own house in Cheyne Walk to that of my brother after the close of 1881 or so. He says also that Mr. Morris asked him "if I really thought Rossetti so ill, or was he only acting, to keep those about him in suspense." It would be for Mr. Morris to say whether he has here been correctly reported. I am not myself aware of any reason he could have had for conjecturing that Rossetti might be "acting," though he had, like other old friends, sufficient cause for knowing that the invalid was fanciful. But, as Mr. Caine has told us, Rossetti ceased even to be fanciful when the origin of the fancies, the chloral-dosing, had ceased, and my own experience of the facts mainly confirms Mr. Caine's.

Mr. Maudsley, his beneficial work being done, finally quitted my brother's house on 27 January. The nurse, Mrs. Abrey, still remained, and she continued with the patient till his dying day, always efficient, kindly disposed towards him and others, and cheerful-tempered. As Mr. Marshall considered that my brother ought now to get change of air, I suggested to the latter that a desirable place might be

Birchington-on-Sea, near Margate—a new marine health-resort where our excellent and long-tried friend Mr. John P. Seddon had built a number of bungalows, or one-storied residences. Dante liked the idea. He wrote to Mr. Seddon, and received a prompt response that a bungalow would be placed at his disposal, and even, by sanction of the owner Mr. Cobb, free of expense. This last item was really not needed. Still, it was, from all points of view, pleasing, and my brother gratefully accepted the offer. Mr. Caine, ever ready to accommodate him, went down to Birchington at the end of the month to make requisite arrangements, and on 4 February he and Rossetti travelled thither in company. There was also Caine's sister, a nice girl of thirteen, now an actress of repute. As my brother's letter of 3 February shows, he had hoped that our mother and Christina could come as well; but both were in a risky state from colds, and the family-doctor, Mr. Stewart, would not for the present allow it. The house was at that time named Westcliff Bungalow—now Rossetti Bungalow, in Rossetti Road; and I might add here that the houses built along my brother's old garden-space in Cheyne Walk are termed Rossetti Mansions. Mr. Scott must surely be mistaken in saying that "the young Doctor" (Mr. Maudsley) was along with Rossetti on his road to Birchington.

Mr. Scott gives another sentence—but not quite his final one—to Rossetti.

"The picture I have drawn had been a painful one to witness in the original, and has been only less so to indicate in narrative, even carefully omitting the most repulsive elements of the scene."

What these "most repulsive elements of the scene" may have been I confess myself unable to surmise. To me it seems that Mr. Scott was at some pains to make the scene more repulsive than in fact it was. But, if he found "the picture a painful one to indicate in narrative," a very obvious question arises—Why did he indicate it? He was professing to write "Autobiographical Notes," and the doings or mis-

doings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti—apart from the aid which he most constantly and determinately lent to this friend's reputation as poet and painter, among acquaintances and with the public—formed no part of the Autobiography of William Bell Scott.

Let me briefly recur to Miss Lily Hall Caine, and her published reminiscences of my brother. These are only, it is true, the reminiscences of a child ; but they are evidently vivid, and I recognize in them several points which I know to be accurately put. They bear strong testimony to the fact that Dante Rossetti, even in the closing months of his life, was very far other than harsh or morose, or so much as invariably gloomy and despondent. Miss Caine was first introduced to him in Cheyne Walk, shortly before the departure for Birchington. She says, *inter alia* :—

“He chatted quite gaily [at the first introduction] until dinner was ready. I had never met a man so full of ideas interesting and attractive to a child ; indeed, now that I look back on it, I feel that Mr. Rossetti was wondrously sweet, tender, and even playful, with a child. . . . On this journey [for Birchington] from Cheyne Walk to the Station he talked all the way, and had tales to tell me of every conspicuous object that came into view. We travelled by the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway, and, as the porter was labelling the luggage, Mr. Rossetti took me by the hand. We were interested in the porter's operations, and Mr. Rossetti was amused at the Company's initial letters—‘L. C. D. R.’ ‘Why, Lily,’ said he, ‘they knew we were coming. That stands for Lily Caine and Dante Rossetti.’”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As regards the house in Cheyne Walk Miss Caine makes a statement which I do not well understand. She says that somewhere in the house (one might infer in the studio) there was a very large and bad picture, “as vulgar as a signpost” (*signboard* must be meant), which Rossetti, when “a student of art,” had bought for £3, although the upset-price ironically demanded was £3,000. I cannot recollect any picture corresponding to this description. There was, however, in the dining-room (not the studio), a well-sized picture, which my brother bought some while after he had settled in Cheyne Walk ; and as to the purchase of some picture or other (I believe it was this one) he used to tell an amusing story not much unlike

## XLI.

*BIRCHINGTON-ON-SEA.*

THE village or "ville" of Birchington, in the Isle of Thanet, is an ancient locality, traceable into Saxon times. I see the name recorded in a map of Kent dated 1645. The oldest portions of the church belong to the later twelfth century. As a seaside resort however the place is very recent—little having been done for tourist or residential purposes until Mr. Seddon took the work in hand. The Bungalow which Rossetti tenanted is a good-looking wooden erection, without being a beautiful one. Its interior is conveniently laid out for an invalid—"a long corridor, and rooms on either side. At the further end was the drawing-room, running the width of the house." It stands conveniently near the railway-station, yet not so close as to interfere with habits of retirement. Here Rossetti, spite of some wayward distaste at the first alighting, settled down, without (I should say) any troublesome craving to get away again.

"The sands are numbered that make up my life :  
Here must I stay, and here my life must end."

At Birchington my brother at first took some short walks ; and he continued free from delusions, though not always, I consider, from some rather fanciful or oblique impressions. These may have been due to the morphia which he took to a moderate extent—no longer injected, but as a dose. Digestive inconveniences which now gave him a great deal of harass are likely to have depended largely on the same cause. The weather was not severe for the season, but at times there was a great deal of wind ; and this wind, a most untoward circumstance, constantly blew from the land, so

the above. It was a well-painted picture, though hard—Flemish or Dutch, towards 1600 ; the subject being a woman (with two or three other figures) making gaufres or hearth-cakes. At the sale of Rossetti's effects it fetched fifty guineas.

that Rossetti got no restorative sea-breezes. His health, it is manifest, was really always going from bad to worse. Yet this was not so clearly apparent from day to day as might have been expected. The local physician, Dr. Harris, proved attentive and discerning, and he acted in concert with written advice received from Mr. Marshall. After a while (more especially, I believe, from indications to which Christina had called his notice) he pronounced that kidney-disease had supervened. From the middle of March my brother had to keep his bed to a great extent, though not by any means without intermission.

On 2 March our mother and Christina, being at length under medical leave to do so, went down to Birchington, and there they stayed until all was over. Our mother was now not far from eighty-two years old. Christina, aged fifty-one, was always more or less an invalid in these years. The effort therefore on their part was a somewhat serious one, willingly, or rather gladly, as it was undertaken. It would be superfluous for me, and only derogatory to them, to speak of the devotion with which they ministered to the beloved son and brother. Mr. Caine was almost always there; his sister left not long before the end; Mr. Watts went from time to time, and was more than welcome; Mr. Shields also once or twice, and Mr. Sharp; Mr. Leyland, who was spending the time on and off at Ramsgate, was also an assiduous and a highly sympathizing visitor. "Watts is a hero of friendship" was, according to Mr. Caine, one of my brother's last utterances, easy enough to be credited.

Rossetti continued painter and poet to the last. At Birchington he went on with the pictures for Mr. Valpy, *Proserpine* and *Joan of Arc*, but I doubt whether this can have been persisted in beyond the month of February. Possibly the very last thing he produced in art was a sketch or two aiming to show the characteristic aspect of our father; for some such memento was asked for, through Teodorico Pietrocola-Rossetti, from Vasto, with a view to the designing and erection of a statue (a project not yet actually carried

out), and Dante would not entirely neglect the request, though he knew that he could no longer do justice to it. I possess the slight sketches—not wholly unlike, but too shakily done for any practical service. As to poetry, he finished at the end of March his old grotesque ballad *Jan Van Hunks*; and even later than that, 5 April, he dictated to Caine two sonnets relevant to his design of *The Sphinx*. I have always considered that his taking up on his deathbed that extremely grim and uncanny though partly bantering theme of *Jan Van Hunks*—a fatal smoking-duel with the devil, who trundles soul and body off to hell—furnished a strong attestation of the resolute spirit in which my brother contemplated his own end, rapidly approaching and (by himself still more than by any others) clearly foreseen; for a man who is in a panic as to his own prospects in any future world would be apt to drop any such subject like a hot coal. He enjoyed immensely writing the ballad, so Miss Caine says, “and laughed with us as he read it bit by bit every night.” At some other times also, according to this lady, he was in high spirits; and on one occasion he told her some tales from the *Arabian Nights*, which he saw her reading, and other amusing stories. It is only too obvious however that at some other times his spirits were low—as low as his sorely obstructed energies, and his life fast flickering to extinction.

He read various books at Birchington, or got them read to him by Christina—most or all of them novels—Miss Braddon’s *Dead Men’s Shoes*, Dickens’s *Tale of Two Cities*, Wilkie Collins’s *Dead Secret*, and others.

Two of the last things my brother did consisted in holding a little correspondence with his old and highly genial friend Mr. Joseph Knight (afterwards his biographer),<sup>1</sup> and with the

<sup>1</sup> In his *Life of D. G. Rossetti*, p. 109, Mr. Knight says that the letter which he received from my brother was “the last letter ever written by Rossetti, dated 5 April 1882”: but on p. 179 he quotes the letter verbatim, giving its date as “5 March ’82.” I have no doubt that “March” is correct. In that case, it might still be that this was the last

French art-writer, M. Ernest Chesneau. Mr. Knight had published, in the French serial *Le Livre*, a very handsome article on Rossetti's *Ballads and Sonnets*. My brother wrote in cordial acknowledgement on 5 March, signing with the pathetic phrase—"With love from all that is left of me, yours affectionately." With M. Chesneau the correspondence opened with a letter from that very accomplished writer and worthy gentleman (whom I knew personally later on) at some date in February, and concluded with his letter of 2 April, only a week prior to my brother's death. As far back as 1868 M. Chesneau had sent to Rossetti his book *Les Nations Rivaless dans l'Art*, and had received a reply at some length, from which a quotation is made in Section XIII. He was now bringing out another book, *La Peinture Anglaise*, and sought some information from Rossetti, not only about his own works in painting, but generally about the Præraphaelite movement. My brother furnished several details in answer; and, being favoured with a copy of Chesneau's remarkable romance named *La Chimère*, bearing a striking frontispiece by Gustave Moreau, he wrote to the French author expressing a very high opinion of the inventive and artistic value of this design. I think it must have been the first thing of Moreau's that he ever saw; for, in or about 1880, having heard Moreau spoken of as a man of mark, he had enquired of me what his paintings were like, and I replied that they had something of the quality of Burne-Jones intermixed with that of the Flemish painter Wiertz. This, his last letter to Chesneau, was (I assume) his last letter in this world, and, save for the two sonnets on *The Sphinx*, about the latest thing he did at all except to resign himself into the arms of Death. There is some pleasure in reflecting that he was thus true till the end to one of his most conspicuous qualities—that of praising with eagerness and energy

letter written by Dante with his own hand, though I hardly suppose so; but it was certainly not the last which he composed and dictated. The last of this kind (for I cannot assume it to have been holograph) was to all appearance the one which M. Chesneau acknowledged on 2 April.

the work of such contemporaries as he at all valued, were they painters or poets.

Our mother in these years kept a short Diary. From the opening days of 1881 it stands in Christina's handwriting. Its terms are neither much detailed nor strongly emotional, but it furnishes some particulars not uninteresting in this connexion. I extract here and there :—

"2 March, Thursday. I and Christina went to Westcliff Bungalow, Birchington-on-Sea (a large one-storied commodious residence lent by Mr. John Seddon), to visit Gabriel, who is staying there with his trained nurse Mrs. Abrey, and Mr. Hall Caine, and his sister Lily (thirteen years old), endeavouring to gain health and strength, and in particular to recover the use of his left hand. But I was grieved indeed to find him much wasted away, suffering, and in a measure depressed, though making us most welcome, and chatty enough on general subjects.

"4 March, Saturday. Fuller particulars from Mrs. Abrey about poor Gabriel's very ailing state. Mr. Watts came down.

"6 March, Monday. Gabriel complains of something new in his foot, which Mr. Watts confidently pronounces a touch of gout. In the evening Mr. Martin, our very kind and helpful neighbour, looked in. He is a builder in connexion with Mr. John Seddon, and also keeps the Westcliff Hotel and Boarding-house close by.

"7 March, Tuesday. Gabriel, suffering from his foot, kept his bed nearly all day, and so doing was fairly comfortable.

"10 March, Friday. Lily Caine returned home to Liverpool.

"18 March, Saturday. Mr. John Seddon, and his brother Major Seddon, called ; Mr. Sharp came down.

"24 March, Friday. Gabriel consulted Dr. Harris, who says there is no paralysis, and nothing he judges irremediable, but a serious condition of nerves. He prescribed at once, and will communicate with Mr. Marshall. He resides near the Birchington Railway-station, and was highly spoken of by Mr. Alcock [the Rector].

"March 26, Sunday. Christina went to Holy Communion. While in church, the wind rose so that she got home with difficulty, helped by a good-natured man, three times taking refuge in cottages, and at last taking a fly. Mr. Leyland called.

“March 28, Tuesday. Mr. Watts came down; Gabriel rallied marvellously.”

This is the last cheerful item which it is allowed me to record concerning my brother; I am glad that it stands associated with the name of Theodore Watts.

## XLII.

## DEATH AND FUNERAL.

THE final sentence in my brother's Family-letters runs, “It is quieter now.” It was soon to be still quieter for him, and that for ever.

On 25 March, the day after I had returned to London from a little lecturing at Wolverhampton, I received from Christina a letter giving decidedly bad news of our brother. I determined to go to Birchington on Saturday, 1 April, and meanwhile I consulted Mr. Marshall. What followed was set down by me in terms dismal enough:—

“Saturday, April 1. Went to Birchington. Found Gabriel in a very prostrate condition physically, barely capable of tottering a few steps, half blind, and suffering a good deal of pain. At least he *feels* all this, whether it is or is not dependent on a morbid state of the perceptions. In spirits he is not worse than might be expected; talks with reason, though not with animation, on any subject that offers. He is writing some tale, but I don't know details [I have since learned that he had taken up anew his old story *St. Agnes of Intercession*, but he did not finish nor even progress with it]; has not attempted any painting-work for some weeks.

“Sunday, April 2. Gabriel, feeling a sensation (I believe delusive) of oppressed breathing, sent round for the local doctor, Harris, who has attended him various times. I was present at the conference, and afterwards spoke at some length to Harris in private. His opinion—as had before been intimated to me—is that the brain is affected, probably some degree of softening of the brain, consequent upon abuse of chloral &c. He regards this as the one nucleus of all the symptoms—bad sight, moveless arm, &c.—which are in

themselves delusions, but not at all delusions as being impressions deriving from the wrong condition of the brain. He thinks—as we all do—that the great thing would be to get Gabriel *occupied*; but how to attain this point is the unsolved problem. Thinks also that some such treatment as that of a physician at Malvern, among other patients, would be better than the dull seclusion of Birching-ton. But, when I explained Gabriel's detestation of new faces etc., he admitted this to be an obstacle. He thinks it quite possible that Gabriel may again do good intellectual work, but of course the tendency of the disease is to weaken the mind. All this is very disheartening—not to me surprising. I shall probably soon speak again to Marshall on the subject. Left Birching-ton about 7—all of us sufficiently low-spirited."

I came away from the Bungalow with a firm conviction that my brother had not long to live, coupled with the feeling (I do not scruple to admit it) that, rather than that so luminous an intellect should be reduced to feebleness or torpor, it were far better to die. My Diary shows a few other particulars, as especially that there was an idea of calling in Sir Andrew Clarke for consultation; but it aids me little now, as I only kept it on with regularity to 5 April, and then broke it off till 9 August. In leaving Birching-ton on 2 April, I had settled to return for some days beginning on the 7th, which was Good Friday. I did so, Mr. Watts bearing me company. Mr. Marshall also had undertaken to attend, for the case was then known to be urgent, as too clearly shown by the following brief extracts from my mother's Diary:—

"April 4, Tuesday. After Gabriel had passed a very suffering day in his own room, Christina sat up till about 1 o'clock, reading to him. Dr. Harris came twice.

"April 5, Wednesday. Dr. Harris, after investigation, gives a most serious opinion of poor Gabriel's state.

"April 6, Thursday. Gabriel so drowsy and sinking that William and Mr. Watts were telegraphed to. I sat up till about midnight, when Christina took my place till past six in the morning.

"April 7, Good Friday. The drowsiness continues. William in great grief, and Mr. Watts, arrived. Mr. Leyland called, affectionately

concerned at the unforeseen alarm. In consequence of Gabriel's having one night expressed to Mrs. Abrey some inclination to see Mr. Alcock, the Rector, having been informed of this, called late in the evening, and prayed with him—I and Mr. Watts uniting.

“April 8, Saturday. Kind Mr. Martin had an awning put up to keep the sick-room cool. Mr. Shields hurried down, but could not see Gabriel at once, and slept here. Mr. Marshall arrived; met Dr. Harris in consultation; declared all the present urgent symptoms to point clearly to uræmia (blood-poisoning from uric acid); and took instant vigorous measures to expel, if possible, the poison from the system. To produce perspiration, Gabriel was wrapped in a hot sheet, and made very hot in bed, besides medicine being administered. The blessed result ensued of his regaining a more natural appearance, and rallying to a less inert general condition. Food, heat, and medicine (though no *solid* food), were kept up through the night, the greater part of which Christina passed keeping Nurse company at the bedside. Mr. Marshall missed his up-train, and so remained on the spot for the night. Mr. Alcock called, and read, and we think prayed, alone with Gabriel, exhorting him to simple trust in God and our Saviour.

“April 9, Easter-day. Mr. Marshall left soon after 9 o'clock, leaving word for me (I was not yet up) that Gabriel continued to hold his own. He also says that, as soon as manageable, Gabriel ought to quit Birchington as being too cold for him, and had best simply return to Chelsea. I gather that the illness is very serious, but not hopeless. Christina missed church, after sitting up towards seven in the morning. Mr. Leyland came; Mr. Alcock paid Gabriel a short bedside visit.<sup>1</sup>—We had arranged to sit up, I till 10, William till 2, Christina last; when suddenly, just after nurse and Mr. Watts together had put a poultice on Gabriel's back (Mr. Watts had but just left the room, nurse was attending to the fire, I was by the bed, rubbing Gabriel's back), Gabriel, who was sitting, fell back, threw his arms out, screamed out loud two or three times close together, and then lay, breathing but insensible. Nurse raised the alarm. Mr. Watts hurried back, and, one on each side, they held Gabriel down; but there was not the slightest struggle or return of

<sup>1</sup> These preceding words for 9 April must have been written at some moderately early hour of that day; what follows was evidently written on 10 April.

consciousness. All assembled round the bed. Mr. Shields flew for Dr. Harris, and in the shortest time returned with him. Gabriel still breathed, but that was all. Dr. Harris once or twice said he still lived—then said he was dead. This took place shortly after nine o'clock p.m. Gabriel had scarcely breathed his last when Lucy, having travelled all day from Manchester, arrived. The instant cause of death, assigned by Dr. Harris, was that the uræmic poison touched the brain ; and he afterwards assured us that there was no pain."

I also, on the evening of 10 April, jotted down an account of our great loss. It runs as follows :—

"Marshall, having stayed over Saturday night, saw Gabriel along with Dr. Harris ; but I did not see Gabriel until after Marshall had left Birchington. Went in to Gabriel soon afterwards, and sat with him a considerable while—the nurse Mrs. Abrey in and out of the room. His complexion was much more natural and less livid than the previous day, but the lips not a good colour ; less wheezing than on Friday, and not more than on Saturday ; eyes somewhat clearer. He talked but little at any time of the day. Did not seem extremely melancholy, but languid, and not roused to any serious effort of attention ; utterance indistinct (same on two previous days). He said twice during the day to me, "I believe I shall die to-night," in a calm voice, not emotional. Also said, 'Yesterday I wished to die, but to-day I must confess that I do not.' I replied that he ought not to wish to die, but rather to continue working with energy, and producing fine things. Every now and then he would sit up and forward on the bed, and I—sometimes nurse—rubbed his back with a circling motion of the hand. I was in and out of the room various times, with Leyland once or twice. Went up on the roof with Caine, to remedy the flapping of a tarpaulin which lay along there, being part of an awning which Martin had on previous day erected outside Gabriel's window. I asked more than once to read to Gabriel (intending to propose *Ecclesiastes*), but he did not wish it ; said 'Perhaps later.' [*Ecclesiastes* had been profoundly impressive to my brother in boyhood and early youth ; and this book, along with the more moving and spiritual portions of the Gospels—I say nothing of dogmatic matter deducible from the Epistles—may be said to have formed the staple of his religious faith, such as it was.] Towards 5 I assisted nurse to put on his

loins a large linseed-and-mustard poultice, and his drawers were put on at same time—both processes much against his will, as he disliked and dreaded the heat in bed. He often demanded to have both off; but this was wrong, and could not be granted. Nurse and I both reasoned with and coaxed him on the subject. I was called to dinner towards 7; and, lingering afterwards in talk with friends, did not re-enter Gabriel's room till (say) 10 minutes to 9—my mother, Watts, and nurse, then with him. The poultice had by that time been renewed, but I was not aware of the fact. He was drowsy, and not taking any particular part in what was going on. My mother having said that she was to leave the room at 10, and Christina to succeed her through the night, I said I would come at 10, and stay till 2, and then Christina could succeed me; and meanwhile I would lie down till 10. Entered drawing-room just about 9, lay down on sofa, and pretty soon dozed. Was roused towards 9.20 by Shields rushing into the room, and loudly summoning me to come at once to Gabriel. Found him with head leaning over towards right, eyes starting but nearly closed, mouth open and twitching. He drew hard breaths at intervals. Shields ran for Dr. Harris, who came in towards 9.30. On entering he replied to our enquiries that Gabriel was still alive. He then proceeded to use the stethoscope, but it did not give the indication of breathing, and Harris pronounced Gabriel dead. Gabriel had, just before Shields entered the drawing-room for me, given two violent cries, and had a convulsive fit, very sharp and distorting the face, followed by collapse. All this passed without my personal cognizance. He died 9.31 p.m.; the others—Watts, mother, Christina, and nurse, in room; Caine and Shields in and out; Watts at Gabriel's right side, partly supporting him."

To these details—painful to write, to remember, and to transcribe—I am only disposed to add that on the evening of Good Friday my brother had, under the guidance of Mr. Watts, made his will, and I fancy he had never done the like before. He left all his property in equal shares between Christina and myself. Christina, being at once apprised of this, absolutely refused to have her name, rather than that of our mother, in the will. It was explained to her that this had been done merely as the more convenient practical

arrangement of the two—the mother and daughter being inseparably united in life, and the daughter being the more probable survivor. But Christina was immoveable in her resolve, and so the name of our mother was immediately substituted for Christina's in the will. As to any money-details arising out of the will, I limit myself to saying that, after paying off my brother's debts (chiefly sums due to Mr. Valpy and Mr. Graham in relation to pictures unfinished), and after the sales of his household and decorative effects and of his remaining works of art, there was a substantial sum divisible between the legatees. Two exhibitions of his paintings and designs, covering the whole of his career, were held, but not under the control of the family; one being at the Royal Academy's winter exhibition of 1883, and the other at the Burlington Fine-Arts Club in the same year; there was a third, a private speculation, called the Rossetti Gallery, in Bond Street.

As mentioned in my mother's Diary, my wife arrived at Westcliff Bungalow almost as soon as Dante had drawn his latest breath. She had been on a visit to her father in Manchester; but, receiving my intimation of the precarious and almost desperate condition of her brother-in-law, she hurried southwards. On 13 April also Charlotte Polidori, the aunt to whom some of the Family-letters are addressed, and who had so often established a claim to Dante's gratitude, joined the mourners in the Bungalow. These arrivals were a great boon to all of us; my wife's of course to me more especially, and Charlotte's to my mother—for the dear tie of sisterhood between these two had always been peculiarly close.

I proceed with some extracts from my mother's Diary :—

"April 10, Easter Monday. A telegram sent by William brought from London a man from Brucciani's to take a cast of Gabriel's face and hand [these casts were taken with no less skill than that which the Brucciani firm always command; but it is a fact that the head proved extremely disappointing to all of us, and seems barely to suggest what my brother was like]. Gabriel looked quite peaceful,

with a tendency towards a smile. Mr. Shields made a drawing of him [this was done at my request, and it was a truly self-sacrificing act of Shields, the most high-strung and susceptible of men, and my brother's devoted friend, to whom such a task was a wrench indeed : I possess the drawing, and the artist afterwards made a copy of it, presented to Christina]. Lucy went with Christina and William to the Rectory, for the purpose of meeting Mr. Alcock, who accompanied the three to the churchyard, where a spot was chosen for the dear grave. Mr. Martin, with his usual kindness, undertakes to make arrangements for the funeral.

"April 12, Wednesday. Mr. Sharp arrived, bent on having a last look.

"April 14, Friday. Mr. Alcock performed the funeral simply and solemnly. Besides myself, Christina, William, Lucy, and Charlotte, there were present—Messrs. Graham, Leyland, Watts, Caine, Hueffer, John Seddon, Stephens, Boyce, Aldam Heaton,<sup>1</sup> Martin, Sharp, Philip Marston, and Shields, and Dr. Harris. Herbert Gilchrist and two others attended spontaneously [the two others were Judge Vernon Lushington, and Mr. Murray Marks, the art-dealer: the former had been an admirer and genial acquaintance of my brother ever since, if not before, the days of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*]. In the evening, Charlotte, William, Lucy, Christina, and Mr. Shields, returned to the churchyard, to place on the grave (already closed and peaceful, under a turf mound) a most beautiful wreath of flowers which we believe was the one sent by Lady Mount-Temple, and brought by Mr. Graham. A number of floral decorations were contributed by different friends. Philip Marston presented a wreath of bay ; the Leylands, wreaths and a lovely white cross ; Mr. Sharp, a cross of primroses. I placed on the grave a bunch of simple flowers, among which were woodspurge [this was of course in memory of Dante's poem *The Woodspurge*] and forget-me-nots. Christina had gathered these in the grounds and conservatory."

<sup>1</sup> Mr. John Aldam Heaton, now well known as a Decorative Artist in London, had, while settled at Bradford in Yorkshire, known my brother on an intimate footing from about 1861 to 1874. A serious difference then arose between them. My brother had right on his side, but he showed more of permanent resentfulness than should be unreservedly approved. We at all events were glad to make peace with Mr. Heaton over the open grave.

Besides the persons above mentioned as attending the funeral, some others had been asked, but, for one reason or another, could not attend—Mrs. Hueffer, Eliza Polidori, Burne-Jones, Bell Scott, Swinburne, Dunn, Dr. Hake, John Marshall, Tebbs, and Valpy. Madox Brown was known to be unavoidably so engrossed with his painting-work in Manchester that it would only have been unkind to ask him. He had been in London towards Christmas, and had then seen my brother two or three times with his unfailing affection.

I take leave to borrow from Mr. Scott's book the feeling letter which Judge Lushington wrote to him on this occasion. The few words given to the church and the churchyard realize the scene well.

"14 April.

"DEAR MR. SCOTT,

"I think you will like to hear how your dear friend Gabriel Rossetti was buried, so I will tell you—for, thanks to your kind telegram, I was there. I had hoped to see *you* there, and was grieved to hear that you were prevented by illness.

"The church at Birchington stands back about three-quarters of a mile from the sea, on slightly rising ground which looks over the open land and the sea. It is of grey country flint, built in the twelfth or thirteenth century, and restored a few years ago—I thought, simply. It is nicely kept, and to-day was full of Easter flowers. It has an old grey tower, and grey shingle spire, which went up, as I noticed during the ceremony, into a pure blue sky. The churchyard is nicely kept too; it was bright with irises and wallflowers in bloom, and close to Gabriel's grave there was a laurestinus and a lilac. The grave is on the south side, close to the porch. It was cut so clearly it seemed carved out of the chalk. Altogether it was a sweet open spot, I thought.

"At the graveside, wonderful to say, was the old mother, supported by William on one side and Christina on the other—a most pathetic sight. She was very calm, extraordinarily calm, but whether from self-command or the passivity of age I do not know—probably from both; but she followed all the proceedings with close interest. Then around was a company of about fifteen or twenty; many of them friends of yours, and several whom I did not know. The service was

well read by the Vicar. Then we all looked into the resting-place of our friend, and thought and felt our last farewells. Many flowers, azaleas and primroses, were thrown in. I saw William throw in his lily of the valley. This is all I have to tell you. Sad it was, very sad, but simple and full of feeling, and the fresh beauty of the day made itself felt with all the rest. I shook hands with William, and came away with Mr. Graham. Dear Gabriel, I shall not forget him.

"I hope you are getting better. Pray remember me to Mrs. Scott."

There are three commemorations of Dante Rossetti—his tombstone in Birchington churchyard, the stained-glass in the church itself, and the fountain-and-bust monument outside his house in Cheyne Walk.

The tombstone, an Irish Cross, was designed by Madox Brown, and is a work of observable excellence. It bears three bas-reliefs—the Temptation in the Garden of Eden, the Spiritual Marriage of Dante and Beatrice, and the Death of St. Luke, the patron of painters. The inscription, which is mine, is thus worded :—

"Here sleeps Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti, honoured, under the name of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, among painters as a painter, and among poets as a poet. Born in London, of parentage mainly Italian, 12 May 1828. Died at Birchington, 9 April 1882. This Cruciform Monument, bespoken by Dante Rossetti's mother, was designed by his lifelong friend Ford Madox Brown, executed by J. and H. Patteson, and erected by his brother William and sister Christina."

The stained-glass window, near the font, was commissioned by my mother, and carried out by Shields. It has two lights, the first being Rossetti's own design of *The Passover in the Holy Family*, and the second by Shields himself, *Christ leading the Blind Man out of Bethsaida*.

The monument in Cheyne Walk was erected by a subscription of friends and admirers, my wife being the chief subscriber. The fountain is the design of John Seddon ;

the bust of Rossetti was executed by Madox Brown in all its details, and cast in bronze.

And so Dante Rossetti rests for ever, in the quiet Kentish churchyard, within sight and distant rumour of the waves.

“Consider the sea’s listless chime ;  
 Time’s self it is, made audible—  
 The murmur of the earth’s own shell.  
 Secret continuance sublime  
 Is the sea’s end: our sight may pass  
 No furlong further. Since time was,  
 This sound hath told the lapse of time.

\* \* \* \*

“As the world’s heart, of rest and wrath,  
 Its painful pulse is in the sands.  
 Last utterly, the whole sky stands,  
 Grey and not known, along its path.”

### XLIII.

#### *PERSONAL DETAILS—EXTRACTS.*

So much has been said about Dante Rossetti’s character in the preceding pages, here and there, and he comes out so transparently himself in the Family-letters, that I do not feel it necessary to attempt any elaborate portrait of him in conclusion. Still, a few words of condensed summary may be desirable.

My brother was essentially a man of the artistic, not the ethical, type. From day to day and from year to year his mind was occupied much more with ideas of art—and in especial how to paint good pictures, and write good poems, in both of which efforts he was as fastidious in execution as he was free and energetic in invention—than with rigid or nice considerations of morals or conduct. None the less, his moral sense was just, if somewhat elastic. He prized rectitude, disliked and shunned meanness, and understood, and mostly conformed to, the fine impulses of honour. He appreciated the generous far more than the regulative virtues. It may indeed be said that he was replete with generosity of mind,

feeling, and act. The very core of his character was self-will, which easily shelved into wilfulness. As his self-will was sustained by very high powers of intellect and of performance, he was not only a leader but a dominator all his life long. On that footing he was easy and agreeable ; any other footing would have been troublesome to himself, and not long to be pursued by others. He would do and say odd things, unreasonable things, and wrongful things. This was in his nature—and, until he was reduced to subjection (not a facile performance, nor accomplished by any one), he would persist in this, *car tel est mon vouloir*. In thought, deed, manner, and speech, there was nothing of the precisian about him. If there had been somewhat at times, that would have been all the better. Not scrupulosity was his, nor moveless fixity of principle ; but warmth and breadth of feeling and of perception. He was impetuous and impatient, but by no means difficult to get on with if one approached him from the right side. He could be managed too, but not driven. Nothing in him stands clearer to my mind than his total freedom from pretence, pretension, attitudinizing, and “tall talk.” He impressed you certainly as a man of genius, but not in the least as one who made his genius his stalking-horse. People of all kinds liked him, and, on seeing him close, loved him. And I could not fix upon one who genuinely disliked him, though there were assuredly several who got ruffled and angry, and of these some may even, on occasion, have dogged him with a certain animosity.

I have sometimes heard it suggested that Dante Rossetti was “a spoilt child” ; but on this score I must acquit our parents of blame. He was reasonably and heedfully trained to whatsoever is of good report. His tendencies, for good or evil, were innate, and developed according to the circumstances of his life. His faults were his own. He neither would nor could be a leopard without leopardine spots. To avoid being a jackal or a hyæna was what he could do, and that he did.

No better portrait of my brother has been given, I think,

than that by the Reverend Canon Richard Watson Dixon, which appears in Mr. Caine's book—possibly a too fully laudatory portrait. Rossetti, writing to Caine towards 1880, described the Canon as “an admirable but totally unknown living poet. His finest passages are as fine as any living man can do.” The Canon is now not “totally unknown” as a poet, but still is less known than he ought to be. I will extract from his narrative what serves my present purpose.

“My knowledge of Dante Gabriel Rossetti was begun in connexion with the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, a monthly periodical which was started in January 1856. Rossetti contributed to it *The Burden of Nineveh*, *The Blessed Damozel*, and *The Staff and Scrip*. *The Staff and Scrip* is, in my judgment, the finest of all Rossetti's poems, and one of the most glorious writings in the language. It exhibits in flawless perfection the gift that he had above all other writers—absolute beauty and pure action. I saw Rossetti for the first time in his lodgings over Blackfriars Bridge. It was impossible not to be impressed with the freedom and kindness of his manner, not less than by his personal appearance. His frank greeting, bold but gentle glance—his whole presence—produced a feeling of confidence and pleasure. His voice had a great charm, both in tone and from the peculiar cadences that belonged to it. I think that the leading features of his character struck me more at first than the characteristics of his genius; or rather that my notion of the character of the man was formed first, and was then applied to his works, and identified with them. The main features of his character were, in my apprehension, fearlessness, kindliness, a decision that sometimes made him seem somewhat arbitrary, and condensation or concentration. He was wonderfully self-reliant. These moral qualities, guiding an artistic temperament as exquisite as was ever bestowed on man, made him what he was—the greatest inventor of abstract beauty, in form and colour, that this age, perhaps that the world, has seen. They would also account for some peculiarities that must be admitted in some of his works—want of Nature, for instance. I heard him once remark that it was ‘astonishing how much the least bit of Nature helped if one put it in’; which seemed like an acknowledgment that he might have gone more to Nature. Hence, however, his works always seem

abstract, always seem to embody some kind of typical aim, and acquire a sort of sacred character.

“I saw a good deal of Rossetti in London, and afterwards in Oxford during the painting of the Union Debating-room. I saw him occasionally almost to the time of his lamented death. My recollection of him is that of greatness, as might be expected of one of the few who have been ‘illustrious in two arts,’ and who stands by himself and has earned an independent name in both. His work was great; the man was greater. His conversation had a wonderful ease, precision, and felicity of expression. He produced thoughts perfectly enunciated with a deliberate happiness that was indescribable; though it was always simple conversation, never haranguing or declamation. He was a natural leader because he was a natural teacher. When he chose to be interested in anything that was brought before him, no pains were too great for him to take. His advice was always given warmly and freely, and, when he spoke of the works of others, it was always in the most generous spirit of praise. It was in fact impossible to have been more free from captiousness, jealousy, envy, or any other form of pettiness, than this truly noble man. The great painter who first took me to him [Burne-Jones, I have no doubt] said, ‘We shall see the greatest man in Europe.’ I have it on the same authority that Rossetti’s aptitude for art was considered amongst painters to be no less extraordinary than his imagination. For example, that he would take hold of the extremity of the brush, and be as certain of his touch as if it had been held in the usual way; that he never painted a picture without doing something in colour that had never been done before; and in particular that he had a command of the features of the human face such as no other painter ever possessed. I also remember some observations by the same assuredly competent judge to the effect that Rossetti might be set against the great painters of the fifteenth century [rather perhaps the sixteenth?], as equal to them though unlike them; the difference being that, while they represented the characters whom they painted, in their ordinary and unmoved mood, he represented his characters under emotion, and yet gave them wholly. It may be added perhaps that he had a lofty standard of beauty of his own invention, and that he both elevated and subjected all to beauty. Such a man was not likely to be ignorant of the great root of power in art; and I once saw him very indignant on hearing that he had been accused of irreligion,

or rather of not being a Christian. He asked with great earnestness, 'Do not my works testify to my Christianity?'

This last detail is interesting. I should like to know what date it applies to. That my brother was a strict doctrinal Christian is not a fact; but he had an earnest reverence for a Christian ideal, and a delight in Christian legend and symbol, and an antipathy to mere arid or disputatious negation. If he had been "accused of not being a Christian," in such a sense as to imply that he reviled the religion, and dissociated himself from it root and branch, I can well understand that he may have gone rather to an opposite extreme in repelling the imputation. On the general bearings of this matter I have already had something to say.

Mr. Joseph Knight aptly observes, "To be his friend was in a sense to be his disciple." He found Rossetti "essentially virile and robust, a little stubborn, and dogmatic in tone—joyous if not absolutely mirthful." I question however whether the epithet "dogmatic" hits the mark exactly. I should prefer "determined," or even "peremptory." Rossetti was always wont to deal in concretes, and not in theoretic system. "In his youth especially," says Mr. Coventry Patmore, "he had the sweet and easy courtesy peculiar to his nation"—*i.e.*, the Italian nation. This I think correct; and in fact I must always regard my brother—spite of some ultra-John-Bullish opinions and ways—as more an Italian than an Englishman—Italian in temper of mind, in the quasi-restriction of his interest to the beautiful and the passionate, in disregard of those prejudices and conventions which we call "Philistine," in general tone of moral perception. And yet he was mentally very far from being like his Italian father, and was wholly unlike his Italian grandfather.—And now for a few words from Mr. Watts<sup>1</sup> :—

"Even at the time Mr. Caine depicts, when Rossetti was ill, his intellectual brilliance showed as little real abatement as did his

<sup>1</sup> From his article *The Truth about Rossetti*, in *The Nineteenth Century*, March 1883.

genius. Late in the night, when the exhaustion of production was recovered from, he would, even to the last, brighten up into his old self—a self that had hardly a match, I should imagine, among his contemporaries. The rapidity of his perceptive powers was sometimes bewildering. Before his interlocutor had well begun his sentence, Rossetti had taken in the idea, and was ready with his answer; an answer clothed always in language so apt and so perfect that no after-revision could have improved it. His wit, though not abundant and not of ‘the rarest water,’ was quite unique. It always had an intellectual basis, and seemed a singular combination of those real analogies sought by the logician and the superficial and fanciful analogies which are the quest of the mere wit.”

To my brother’s appearance I have referred casually in some preceding pages, and I shall add but little now. As in mind, so in body, he looked to me rather Italian than English, though many persons entertained a contrary notion. Mr. Knight (as we have seen) thinks that he was fairly like Salvini, and so do I; and I remember that Hueffer, on returning from an Italian trip towards 1872, told me that, rather to his surprise, he had found the type of my brother’s face to be a very usual, almost a commonplace, one in Italy—an opinion to which I assent, with a certain demur. My brother became eventually—not in boyhood and youth—something like our father, yet not in such a way as would have struck an ordinary eye. His complexion,<sup>1</sup> clear and warm, was also dark—not dusky or sombre. The hair was dark, and somewhat silky; the full-sized eyes blueish-grey; the brow grandly spacious and solid; the mouth moderately well-shaped, but with a rather thick and unmoulded underlip; the chin unremarkable; the line of the jaw, narrow and rather tapering in youth, was, after youth had passed, full, rounded, and sweeping; the ear well-formed, and rather small

<sup>1</sup> Some of these items of description are repeated, without much modification, from my Preface to Dante Rossetti’s *Collected Works*; being true there, they must be equally true here, and I need not beat about the bush to vary them. Other telling details were given by Mr. Holman Hunt, as in Section XXX.

than large. His hands and feet were small ; the hands quite in character for an artist or author—white, delicate, plump, and soft as a woman's. Miss Caine correctly notices that he had a rather fidgeting habit of nicking (she says "cracking," but I think that less accurate) his right thumb-nail with the nail of the first finger ; also a habit of shaking very rapidly, and for long whiles together, the foot of one leg crossed over the other. His general aspect was compact and determined, with the facial expression of a fiery and dictatorial mind concentrated into repose. Some people regarded him as eminently handsome, and no one could call him other than a well-looking noticeable man. In habit of body he was more than sufficiently indolent and lounging ("lolling about, and behaving like a seal on a sandbank," as Smetham expressively worded it), disinclined to any prescribed or trying exertion, yet not at all wanting in active promptitude whenever it suited his liking. He often seemed merely unoccupied, especially of an evening ; the brain continued busy enough. A reader, to be sure, he was, but not a *great* reader.

"Unto the man of yearning thought  
And aspiration, to do nought  
Is in itself almost an act,—  
Being chasm-fire and cataract  
Of the soul's utter depths unsealed.  
Yet woe to thee if once thou yield  
Unto the act of doing nought."

Various writers will have it that Rossetti cared nothing for the beauties of Nature—was indifferent to scenery etc. I think this an exaggeration. Italians however are not, as a rule, so minute in observation of scenery, so full of "gush" over hills and trees, so Wordsworthian in co-ordinating phenomena and emotion, as some English people have become : the Italians are open rather to the total impression of a scene—whether it is cheerful, gloomy, homely, sublime, or what not. In this relation again I consider my brother to have been much more Italian than English. To the beauties of Nature he was not insensitive, but he was incurious, and

he valued them more as being so much fuel to the fire of the soul than as being objects of separate regard and analysis. For him the Human Being was always the Lord of Creation—the recipient and transformer and transmitter of the natural influences. That he cared very little for descriptive *poetry* is perfectly true—and just on that account ; that it exhibits and extols objects instead of turning them into the “medium of exchange” between the material world and the soul. Still he saw for himself several things in Nature, both in mass and in detail ; and his work in painting and in poetry testifies no less.

Rossetti took no part, and belonged to no party, in politics. He had ideas, and applied them to national as well as other problems ; but he paid no attention at all to the hourly and yearly scuffle over questions of practical legislation and administration, whether in this country or in others. He liked enlightenment, justice, and mercy, in public affairs ; he disliked obtuseness, oppression, injustice, and ruthlessness. I cannot call him either Liberal or Conservative, in the current acceptation of those terms. He could see that there was right in liberty, and right in conservation. In British politics he was neutral ; in Italian politics—apart from a general conviction that there was no reason why Austrians should, as in the days of his youth, be lording it over Italians—he was neutral also. And so in relation to other nations. I can recollect one instance—there may have been others, but certainly few—in which he expressed a decided opinion upon a foreign national transaction. It was when all the hubbub arose as to the shooting of Maximilian, the so-called Emperor of Mexico. He asked me what it was all about ; and I feel pretty sure that the whole affair came new to him. I explained to him that Maximilian was an Austrian prince whom Napoleon III., for reasons of his own, had imposed upon the Mexican Republic as an Emperor ; that Maximilian, in this character, made military expeditions against Mexican Republicans, and shot them when caught ; and that the ousted Mexican President, Juarez, finally caught Maximilian, and

shot him as well. My brother replied, "I think it was just," an opinion which entirely coincided with my own. Mr. Caine's impression is that "It would be wrong to say that he was wholly indifferent to important political issues, of which he took often a very judicial view." And indeed I think that, if Rossetti had been at the pains of forming and formulating opinions on current questions of policy, they would frequently have been found correct after the lapse of a few years.

I shall now proceed to give from various sources some of his most marked observations on divers subjects. It would perhaps be of little use to classify them, beyond a rough division into those which relate respectively to fine art, to literature, and to other topics. My extracts are of course faithful, but they are frequently much curtailed.

*Fine Art.*—Mr. Holman Hunt says with regard to the early days in the Cleveland Street studio :—

"We spoke of the improvement of design in household objects—furniture, curtains, and interior decorations—and dress ; of how we would exercise our skill, as the early painters had done, not in one branch of art only, but in all. For sculpture, Rossetti in private expressed little regard. He professed admiration for the minds of many men engaged in it ; but he could scarcely understand their devotion to work which seemed, in modern hands, so cold and meaningless, and which was so limited in its power of illustration. He confessed however that so far he had not thought of it enough. Music he regarded as positively offensive" [and I regret to allow that he never much receded from this narrowness of view in relation to abstract or elaborate music, though he could enjoy an opera, or a simple tuneable song].

Mr. Caine reports :—

"I asked if his work usually took much out of him in physical energy. 'Not my painting, certainly,' he replied, 'though in early years it tormented me more than enough. Now I paint by a set of unwritten but clearly-defined rules, which I could teach to any man as systematically as you can teach arithmetic.'"

In Paris, in 1864, he was much delighted with the paintings of Millet, who was not then of the world-wide fame which he afterwards attained ; and he spoke of this name, in writing to Mr. George Rae, as “ curiously identical with that of our best English painter.”

Mr. Sharp says :—

“ I once asked him how he would reply to the asseveration that he was the head of the ‘ Art-for-Art’s-sake ’ school ; and his response was to the effect that the principle of the phrase was two-thirds absolutely correct, and one-third so essentially wrong that it negated the whole as an aphorism.”

From letters to Mr. Scott, 1871 :—

“ Your sorrows in connexion with that infernal word *quaint* recall my own. Only quite lately I had it revived by a friendly critic on my work, though a lapse of years had occurred since I last heard it in such relation, and I had hoped it and I had parted company. However, it will be ‘ in at the death ’ with both of us. Good God, I cannot see the faintest trace of this adjective in either of your etchings which you mention. By the bye, on this point I have always meant, and always forgotten, to ask if you noticed an astounding controversy raised in *Notes and Queries* about a wretched little daub of mine called *Greensleeves*. Bad the thing is, probably enough ; but how it should suggest to any human mind the maniacal farrago conjured up in these letters is incomprehensible, except as revealing to one the degree to which the world considers oneself insane.<sup>1</sup> On reading them my brain whirled, and I sent to Agnew

<sup>1</sup> The utterances in *Notes and Queries* about *Greensleeves* are certainly surprising enough. They begin on 3 June 1871. A lady, M. M. C., had seen the picture in Messrs. Agnew’s Exhibition in Manchester. She was fascinated by it, but could not make it out, as one hand of the personage seemed to be living, and the rest of her figure dead. She got a friend to write on the subject to *Notes and Queries*. He conjectured that the living hand must be touching emblems of the lady’s lover, while the rest of her figure indicated a state of suspended vitality. In a later number, 29 July, Mr. William Chappell opined that as a “ *Greensleeves* ” was, in Tudor times, a sort of demirep, the lady pictured by Rossetti was meant to have “ one side fair, and the other on the verge of the grave.”

for the thing, to see if it bore any internal explanation with it. It seemed a poor daub when examined, but certainly innocent of the special enormities charged to it. However, once having laid hands on it, I gave it a good daubing all over, and transmogrified it so completely (title and all) as to separate it for ever, I hope, from this Bedlam correspondence—which, by-the-bye, I find revived this week, to end God knows when or where. . . . It would really be worth your while one day, if you keep *Notes and Queries*, to look back at the first of these *Greensleeves* letters: it would enlarge your ideas as to the gaping astonishment and perverse misconception of which we were writing lately.”

Again, 1871 :—

“Your article on Leys takes, I think, quite the true view, and is equal to its important theme. However, I am not sure that you dwell quite strongly enough on the fascination which Leys’s intensity as antiquarian and colourist gives him even to the most ideal class of poetic minds—though, as you say, it be quite questionable whether there were any absolute poetry in his springs of action. I am much concerned to find that you have alluded in no way whatever to Wiertz, whose works I never saw (with one large exception, quite noteworthy enough to increase curiosity), but who, I am sure, must have been the greatest mental genius (except Leys in his very different walk) whom they [the existing Belgian school] have had yet.”

Phrases reported by Mr. Shields :—

“The man who, on seeing a work with claims to regard, does not perceive its beauties before its faults, is a conceited fool. I am ashamed to belong to a profession in which the possession of intellect is rather a disqualification than an advantage. The men of imagination in England have always been as a persecuted sect.”

*Literature.*—From a letter to Mr. Caine :—

“Surely you are strong enough to be English pure and simple. I am sure I could write 100 essays (I once did project a series under the title, *Essays written in the Intervals of Elephantiasis, Hydrophobia, and Penal Servitude*) without once experiencing the ‘aching void’ which is filled by such words as *mythopæic* and

*anthropomorphism*. I do not find life long enough to know in the least what they mean. They are both very long and very ugly indeed—the latter only suggesting to me a Vampire or Somnambulant Cannibal. To speak rationally—would not ‘man-evolved Godhead’ be an *English* equivalent? [This shows that my brother did really not accurately know what anthropomorphism means.] Simple English, in prose-writing and in all narrative poetry (however monumental language may become in abstract verse), seems to me a treasure not to be foregone in favour of German innovations.” [The context relieves Rossetti from the suspicion that he could have supposed the two impugned words to be of Teutonic stock.]

From another letter to Mr. Caine :—

“I wrote the tale of *Hand and Soul* (with the exception of an opening page or two) all in one night in December 1849, beginning I suppose about 2 a.m., and ending about 7. In such a case a landscape and sky all unsurmised open gradually in the mind—a sort of spiritual Turner, among whose hills one ranges and in whose waters one strikes out at unknown liberty. But I have found this only in nightlong work, which I have seldom attempted, for it leaves one entirely broken ; and this state was mine when I described the like of it at the close of the story, how long ago !”

Mr. Caine observes :—

“‘The three greatest English imaginations,’ he would sometimes add, ‘are Shakespear, Coleridge, and Shelley.’ I have heard him give a fourth name, Blake. He thought Wordsworth was too much the high-priest of Nature to be her lover.” [Shelley has implied much the same in his admirable *Peter Bell the Third*—a poem which my brother read for the first time in 1880 ; and he then expressed to me his astonishment at its brilliant handling of a theme so little Shelleyan.]

Again from letters to Mr. Caine :—

“You must take care to be on the right tack about Chatterton. I am very glad to find the gifted Oliver Madox Brown already an embryo classic, as I always said he would be ; but those who compare nett results in such cases cannot know what criticism means. Oliver was the product of the most teeming hotbeds of art and

literature. Moreover Chatterton, at his death, was two years younger than Oliver; a whole lifetime of advancement at that age frequently—indeed always, I believe, in leading cases. . . . I must protest finally about Chatterton that he lacks nothing, because lacking the gradual growth of the emotional in literature which becomes evident in Keats—still less its excess, which would of course have been pruned, in Oliver. In the matter of Oliver (whom no one appreciates more than I do), remember it was impossible to have more opportunities than *he* had, or on the other side fewer than Chatterton had.”

I recur to Mr. Caine’s narrative :—

“Reverting to my enquiry as to whether his work took much out of him, he remarked that his poetry usually did. ‘In that respect,’ he said, ‘I am the reverse of Swinburne. For his method of production inspiration is indeed the word. With me the case is different. I lie on the couch, the racked and tortured medium, never permitted an instant’s surcease of agony until the thing on hand is finished.’ It was obvious that what Rossetti meant by being racked and tortured was that his subject possessed him. Assuredly impulse was, to use his own phrase, fully developed in his Muse. [I fancy my brother’s very strong expressions were a little overstrained, partly to give glory to Mr. Swinburne by contrast. I never witnessed such “agony,” nor heard him speak of it. His sonnet *The Song-throe* however proves how deeply impressed he was with the conviction that, in order to move his reader, the poet must himself be moved.] ‘One benefit I do derive,’ Rossetti added, ‘as a result of my method of composition. My work becomes condensed. Probably the man does not live who could write what I have written more briefly than I have done. All poetry, that is really poetry, affects me deeply, and often to tears. It does not need to be pathetic or yet tender to produce such a result.’”

From letters from Rossetti to Caine, in reference to that gentleman’s proposed volume, *Sonnets of Three Centuries* :—

“Sonnets of mine could not appear in any book which contained such rigid rules as to rhyme as are contained in Watts’s letter. [Rossetti was afterwards satisfied that Watts had not intended the degree of rigidity here supposed.] I neither follow them, nor agree

with them as regards the English language. Every sonnet-writer should show full capability of conforming to them in *many* instances; but never to deviate from them in English must pinion both thought and diction, and (mastery once proved) a series gains rather than loses by such varieties as do not lessen the only absolute aim—that of beauty. The English sonnet, too much tampered with, becomes a sort of bastard madrigal; too much, invariably, restricted, it degenerates into a shibboleth. I would not be too anxious, were I you, about anything, in choice of sonnets, except the brains and the music. It would not be at all found that my best sonnets are always in the mere form which I think the best. The question with me is regulated by what I have to say. You have much too great a habit of speaking of a special octave, sestet, or line. Conception, my boy, *fundamental brain-work*—that is what makes the difference in all art. Work your metal as much as you like, but first take care that it is gold and worth working. A Shakespearean sonnet is better than the most perfect in form because Shakespear wrote it.”

From a letter (apparently) addressed by Rossetti to Mr. William Sharp :—

“Above all ideal personalities with which the poet must learn to identify himself there is one supremely real which is the most imperative of all—namely, that of his reader. And the practical watchfulness needed for such assimilation is as much a gift and instinct as is the creative grasp of alien character. It is a spiritual contact hardly conscious yet ever renewed, and which must be a part of the very act of production. . . . The quality of finish in poetic execution is of two kinds. The first and highest is that when the work has been all mentally ‘cartooned,’ as it were, beforehand, by a process intensely conscious but patient and silent—an occult evolution of life.”

From a letter to Scott, 1853 :—

“The *Life-drama* [of Alexander Smith] has nothing particular to say, except that it seems to bear vaguely towards the favourite doctrine that scoundrelism is a sacred probation of the soul. But I

find this everywhere. I am reading *Wilhelm Meister*, where the hero's self-culture is a great process, amusing and amazing one. On one page he is in despair about some girl he has been the death of; in the next you are delighted with his enlarged views of Hamlet. Nothing, plainly, is so fatal to the duty of self-culture as self-sacrifice, even to the measure of a grain of mustard-seed. The only other book I have read for more than a year is St. Augustine's *Confessions*, and here you have it again. As soon as the Saint is struck by the fact that he has been wallowing, and inducing others to wallow, it is all horrible together, but involves no duty, except the comfortable self-appeasement of getting out of it for himself. As for the women, no doubt they are nascent for hell."

From another letter to Scott, 1871 :—

"Browning's poem, *Balaustion's Adventure*, looks alarming beforehand. I have written to have it sent me, when out. However, no doubt there will be plenty to admire and enjoy. Browning seems likely to remain, with all his sins, the most original and varied mind, by long odds, which betakes itself to poetry in our time."

Again, 1871 :—

"Another happy man, after all, seems to be Allingham, for all his want of 'success.' Nothing but the most absolute calm and enjoyment of outside Nature could account for so much gadding hither and thither on the soles of his two feet. Fancy carrying about grasses for hours and days from the field where Burns ploughed up a daisy! Good God, if I found the daisy itself there, I would sooner swallow it than be troubled to carry it twenty yards. . . . I hardly ever do produce a sonnet except on some basis of special momentary emotion. But I think there is another class admissible also, and that is the only other I practise—viz., the class depending on a line or two clearly given you, you know not whence, and calling up a sequence of ideas. This also is a just *raison d'être* for a sonnet; and such are all mine when they do not in some sense belong to the 'occasional' class. As for *Commandments* [the poem now called *Soothsay*], the three verses came into my head during a walk, and I think of carrying it further probably—

only such-like verses do not interest me much. . . . I had some painting task-work to do, and have set about a little, not task-work, also; and these have kept me from the other Muse, who, I believe, after all is my true mistress. I am sure, when one has once got used to brush-work, one cannot somehow do without it."

To Mr. Gosse, 1873 :—

"It seems to me that all poetry, to be really enduring, is bound to be as *amusing* (however trivial the word may sound) as any other class of literature; and I do not think that enough amusement to keep it alive can ever be got out of incidents not amounting to events, or out of travelling-experiences of an ordinary kind, however agreeably, observantly, or even thoughtfully treated. I would eschew in writing all themes that are not so trenchantly individualized as to leave no margin for discursiveness."

Oliver Madox Brown, writing to his father from Kelmscott in 1874, reports :—

"Rossetti seems in a wonderfully good temper at present. He has had several long discussions with me on the subject of novel-writing, from which I see plainly that he has great facility of expression, but that he would be a dangerous preceptor. Thackeray he will hardly hear the name of; George Eliot is vulgarity personified; Balzac is melodramatic in plot, conceited, wishywashy, and dull. Dumas is the one great and supreme man, the sole descendant of Shakespear."

These are slightly surprising utterances, and I am sure they lost nothing, in the way of downrightness, at the hands of their reporter. That my brother, in his maturer manhood, read Dumas with vastly more zest than the other three novelists named, is decidedly true: that he here made a mistake is, to some others besides myself, by no means obvious. Thackeray, I consider, he always valued within certain limitations; perhaps he hardly read him at all after 1855 to 1858 or thereabouts. I scarcely know why—or whether—he regarded George Eliot as "vulgarity personified."

He may have thought that there was in her a considerable infusion of the commonplace tempering the stuck-up; and I remember that, when *Romola* first appeared, he spoke of it to me as totally misapprehending the moral temper of those times—which (but I never read the romance) is probably true. Balzac he most highly admired from certain points of view, and he certainly rated him as one of the most intellectual and deep-probing men of our age: yet he may, in a one-sided mood, have been prepared to apply to his writings the epithets set forth by Oliver Brown, with the possible exception of “wishywashy.”

From a letter to James Smetham, consequent on his review of Alexander Smith (in the *London Quarterly Review*), 1868:—

“I was equally delighted with what you say about Dobell’s *Keith*<sup>1</sup> of *Ravelston*—not only because you have so flatteringly lugged-in my name in connexion with it, but because I have always regarded that poem as being one of the finest, of its length, in any modern poet—ranking with Keats’s *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, and the other masterpieces of the condensed and hinted order so dear to imaginative minds. What a pity it is that Dobell generally insists on being so long-winded, when he can write like that! There is a snatch of sea-song (about the *Betsy Jane*) in *Balder* which is fifty times as good as anything in Dibdin, who is nevertheless not contemptible.”

Two notes from my Diary, May 1869 and December 1879:—

“Gabriel has written several new sonnets. His practice with poetry is first to write the thing in the rough, and then to turn over dictionaries of rhymes and synonyms so as to bring the poem into

<sup>1</sup> Some persons seem to suppose that Rossetti took his surname “Keith” in *Sister Helen* from Dobell’s *Keith of Ravelston* (in which, had he done it, there could be no harm); but in fact *Sister Helen* was written—I think it was even published—before Dobell’s admirable ballad was in print.

the most perfect form. . . . Gabriel's view of the subject-matter of my Lectures, *The Wives of Poets*, is that those poets who have been happy with their wives were, although truly poets in performance, personally of an unpoetic character, conventionally compliant etc.—such as Wordsworth and Walter Scott."

*General Subjects.*—From letters from Rossetti to Caine, following an offer from the latter to dedicate to him a Lecture *On the Relation of Politics to Art*:—

"I must admit, at all hazards, that my friends here consider me exceptionally averse to politics; and I suppose I must be, for I never read a Parliamentary Debate in my life. At the same time I will add that, among those whose opinions I most value, some think me not altogether wrong when I venture to speak of the momentary momentousness and eternal futility of many noisiest questions. However, you must simply view me as a nonentity in any practical relation to such matters. You have spoken but too generously of a sonnet of mine, in your Lecture just received [this must be the sonnet *On Refusal of Aid between Nations*]. I have written a few others of the sort (which by-the-bye would not prove me a Tory), but felt no vocation—perhaps no right—to print them. I have always reproached myself as sorely amenable to the condemnations of a very fine poem by Barberino, *On Sloth against Sin*, which I translated in the Dante volume. Sloth, alas, has but too much to answer for with me; and is one of the reasons (though I will not say the only one) why I have always fallen back on quality instead of quantity in the little I have ever done. Volition is vain without vocation; and I had better really stick to knowing how to mix vermilion and ultramarine for a flesh-grey, and how to manage their equivalents in verse. To speak without sparing myself—my mind is a childish one if to be isolated in Art is child's play. . . . I have been thinking yet more on the relations of politics and art. I do think seriously on consideration that not only my own sluggishness, but vital fact itself, must set to a great extent a veto against the absolute participation of artists in politics. When has it ever been effected? True, Cellini was a bravo, and David a good deal like a murderer; and in these qualities they were not without their political use in very turbulent times."

To Mr. Scott, *à propos* of the poem *Cloud Confines*, 1871 :—

“I cannot suppose that any particle of life is *extinguished*, though its permanent individuality may be more than questionable. Absorption is not annihilation ; and it is even a real retributive future for the special atom of life to be re-embodied (if so it were) in a world which its own former identity<sup>1</sup> had helped to fashion for pain or pleasure.”

To Mr. Smetham, 1865 :—

“I am afraid you will think no better of me for pronouncing the commonplace verdict that what you lack is simply ambition—*i.e.*, the feeling of pure rage and self-hatred when any one else does better than you do. This, in an ambitious mind, leads not to envy in the least, but to self-scrutiny on all sides,—and that, to something, if anything can. You comfort yourself with other things, whereas Art must be its own comforter, or else comfortless.”

To Alexander Gilchrist, 1861, relative to the death of Benjamin Woodward, the Architect of the Oxford Museum,—also in 1862 to Mrs. Gilchrist on her husband's death :—

“I must have been the last friend who saw Woodward in England, as he called here [14 Chatham Place], after we had long been unseen by each other, on his way to the Station, going this last time to Paris. I am sitting now in the place, and I think in the chair, he sat in—to write this. If I am ever found worthy to meet him again, it will be where the dejection is unneeded which I cannot but feel at this moment ; for the power of further and better work must be the reward bestowed on the deserts and checked aspirations of such a sincere soul as his. . . . What can be done except to trust to what is surely a natural instinct in all ?—that is, that such terrible partings from love and work must be, unless all things are a mere empty husk of nothing, a guide to belief in a new field of effort, and a second communion with those loved and lost.”

<sup>1</sup> The word stands printed “ideality” ; but surely that is a mistake.

## XLIV.

*ROSSETTI AS PAINTER AND POET—EXTRACTS.*

THROUGHOUT the writing of my Memoir no question has been more present to my mind than this—whether it would or would not behove me to offer in concluding some remarks of my own upon the general measure of attainment of Dante Rossetti as painter and poet, and upon the quality and value of his work in the two arts. Having been a critic of fine art and of poetry all my life, I could address myself to the task with some degree of self-confidence; and I can safely say that my praise would be less extreme, and my strictures not less frank, than those of some other writers on the subject. But finally I have decided to abstain altogether, and to leave readers to surmise for themselves the opinions which one brother, of very minor pretensions, entertains of another who has made a considerable figure in the records of his time. I shall limit myself to extracting a few observations from the large amount of writing of which Dante Rossetti has been the subject—writing done in some instances by the men who themselves stand foremost as painters or as poets. Of opinions unvouched by the author's name I shall take no count, though some of these also are well known, to myself and to others, to emanate from persons of the highest qualifications. I do not, in my extracts, omit some comments much less than eulogistic; but I do omit such abuse as that of Mr. Robert Buchanan (long ago recanted by himself), and such theoretic depreciation as that of Herr Max Nordau.

*Fine Art.*—From the speech of Sir Frederick Leighton, P.R.A., at the banquet of the Royal Academy, 1882 :—

“The other [he had already said something about John Linnell, then also recently deceased] was a strangely interesting man, who, living in almost jealous seclusion as far as the general world was concerned, wielded nevertheless at one period of his life [at *all* periods might well have been said] a considerable influence in the

world of Art and Poetry—Dante Gabriel Rossetti, painter and poet. A mystic by temperament and right of birth, and steeped<sup>1</sup> in the Italian literature of the middle age, his works in either art are filled with a peculiar fascination and fervour, which attracted to him, from those who enjoyed his intimacy, a rare degree of admiring devotion.”

The Royal Scottish Academy passed the following resolution, 1882. Probably Sir Noel Paton could say of its terms, “Quorum pars magna fui.” :—

“The Council have heard with much regret of the death, on Sunday last, of Mr. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whose many-sided and original genius and high accomplishments, not only as a painter but as a poet also, have shed a lustre on the artistic profession. From his super-sensitive aversion to exhibitions, his thoughtful and imaginative pictures are but little known to the general public ; but his influence on contemporary English art has confessedly been very great, while that of his poetry has been more widely and markedly felt. Probably few artists of more distinct individuality and intellectual force ever appeared ; and his removal in the full maturity of his power cannot but be regarded as a heavy loss to art and literature.”

Holman Hunt—with regard to Rossetti at the outset of Præraphælitism :—

“Rossetti, with his spirit alike subtle and fiery, was essentially a proselytizer, sometimes to an almost absurd degree, but possessed, alike in his poetry and painting, with an appreciation of beauty of the most intense quality.”

Frederic G. Stephens :—

“Excepting one or two later works of the master, where sentiment of a more exalted sort, as in *Proserpina*, inspired the designs, *The Beloved* appears to me to be the finest production of his genius. Of his skill, in the high artistic sense, implying the vanquishment

<sup>1</sup> Thus printed. But perhaps it ought to run—“A mystic *by temperament, and by right of birth steeped* in the Italian literature” etc.

of prodigious difficulties—difficulties the greater because of his imperfect technical education—there cannot be two opinions as to the pre-eminence of Mr. Rae's magnificent possession. It indicates the consummation of Rossetti's powers in the highest order of modern art, and is in perfect harmony with that poetical inspiration which is found in every one of his more ambitious pictures. This example can only be called Venetian, because of the splendid colouring which obtains in it. The intensity of Venetian art is exalted (if that term be allowed) in a modern strain; while its form, coloration, and chiaroscuro, are most subtly devised to produce a whole which is thoroughly harmonized and entirely self-sustained. Of how few modern instances could this be said! Rossetti's *Beloved* is in English art what Spenser's gorgeous and passionate *Epithalamium* is in English verse, and, if not more rapturous, it is more compact of sumptuous elements."

Harry Quilter :—

"In an age when painters have few beliefs, and hold those very lightly, this man scarcely stirred a step in art except in obedience to his own inspiration, and was strong enough, despite all his failings, to modify the practices, if he did not actually change the creeds, of half the artists of his time. To him Millais owed his poetical inspiration, and his most beautiful pictures were painted under that influence; to him Holman Hunt was even more indebted [this I think highly disputable, or indeed erroneous]; from him, though soon able to strike out a line for himself, sprang Mr. Burne-Jones, fully equipped for the fight, like a second Minerva from the brain of a second Jove; to his early friendship with William Morris at Oxford we probably owe the determining influence [also disputable] which set the author of *The Earthly Paradise* on the road to that decoration which has changed the look of half the houses in London, and substituted art for ugliness all over the kingdom; and to him probably, if we could trace it back, we owe, almost equally with Ruskin who defended him, the growth of the feeling that art was more than a mere trade, and that an artist has duties to himself and his art, as well as to his pocket and his public. In the minds of hundreds of young men who never even saw him there lurked a satisfaction that down at Chelsea a man was living, painting, and

writing, without caring a brass farthing what any one thought of his works ; and, though I do not mean to defend the morality or the wisdom of such indifference, I do mean to assert that it is the one temper that produces good artistic work. The place of his painting is even harder to determine [than that of his poetry]. Many artists would tell us that it is not painting at all, and from one point of view they would be right. But is this really the question? Who shall decide what is and what is not painting, if we once leave the broad track of beautiful colour applied to a canvas so as to produce a beautiful result? And, if the decision can be made so as to exclude the work of which we are talking, we should have to consider whether, if this be not painting, it is not something else than painting which we require. It is at all events—Art. There is no doubt of that ; and in the best examples it possesses three qualities, which it is excessively rare to find in combination. It is at once passionate, poetical, and refined, and defies the spectator to associate it with ideas of manufacture. Such as it is, the work has evidently grown from its author's character, like a flower from the earth, and bears scarcely a trace of another's influence. As poems in colour, the world has seen nothing finer since the days of Titian."

In this passage Mr. Quilter has spoken strongly of the influence produced by Rossetti upon painting and the decorative forms of art. His influence upon poetry was hardly or not at all less considerable. Our two greatest living poets, Swinburne and William Morris, allow this ; and I am fully of opinion that his early preaching-forth of Browning counted in the long run for a great deal. And so with blue china, Japanese art, and the modern taste in bookbinding. It may to some seem absurd—and yet I believe it to be quite true—that he modified for some years the British taste in female beauty ; promoting the possessors (or the imitators) of auburn-golden hair, those who wore the hair low down on the forehead, and the owners of strong-set profiles—rich lips, and vigorous chiselled sweep of jaw and chin—also stateliness of height and tall throats. "No Roman noses need apply." Along with all this went fashions of dress. But of course

fashions are fleeting, and there is a new generation which “knows not Joseph.” It may be said, and I think truly, that the actual style of his paintings has not, since his death, left any such traces on the British School as might by his upholders have been looked for. But Burne-Jones remains in the ascendant (long may he so continue!)—and this betrays the vestiges of Rossetti.

Ruskin wrote, in a letter to Rossetti dating probably early in 1855 :—

“It seems to me that, among all the painters I know, you on the whole have the greatest genius ; and you appear to me also to be—as far as I can make out—a very good sort of person. I see that you are unhappy, and that you can’t bring out your genius as you should. It seems to me then the proper and *necessary* thing, if I can, to make you more happy ; and that I shall be more really useful in enabling you to paint properly, and keep your room in order, than in any other way.”

James Smetham, towards 1871 :—

“In two different ways I see and admire the stern toil of Ford Madox Brown and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. No one knows what work costs these men, and how profitable it is to see their example.”

Frederick J. Shields :—

“The mere sum of work often accomplished in a day was astounding ; for, when once he grappled with his picture, he never, when in health, let go his grip till daylight failed him.”

Dr. Hake :—

“The Manor-house [at Kelmscott] was adequately furnished ; but some exquisite chalk-drawings—one especially—of female heads gave it a charm. I thought that no one ever could paint a woman’s eyes like Rossetti. There was a softness, a delicacy, a life, a soul, in them, never seen elsewhere but in living beings, and that how rarely !”

Professor Edouard Rod :—

“ Je ne crois pas qu'on trouverait dans l'histoire des arts un cas plus curieux que cette retraite d'un artiste tout jeune, célèbre avant l'âge, doué des facultés les plus exceptionnelles, et qui, pendant plus de trente ans, inconnu de la foule, exerça sur une partie considérable de l'élite intellectuelle de son pays une sorte d'occulte royauté. Rossetti a ce trait commun avec les grands peintres de la Renaissance italienne, qu'il s'attache plus à la peinture de l'homme qu'à celle de la nature. Mais—et voici où il est bien du Nord—ce n'est pas l'homme physique qui l'attire, l'animal humain (comme dit M. Taine), c'est l'homme intérieur. Aussi, dédaigneux des belles formes du corps, ne recherche-t-il que l'expression, et le genre de beauté qui peut le mieux la faire ressortir. Ce qu'il y a de religieux en lui ce n'est donc pas la foi au surnaturel, l'idéal transcendantal, le besoin d'établir la vie sur des bases fixes : c'est une disposition toute subjective, une faculté très moderne, l'extase. Ses figures ont une immobilité, un silence, une attitude presque suspendue, une hésitation lente dans leurs rares mouvements, qui les font ressembler à ces figures de rêve qui demeurent comme posées devant l'imagination, sans cependant se préciser entièrement. Parfois il se plaît à les entourer de brillants accessoires, sans que pour cela elles perdent un instant leur apparence surnaturelle, le je ne sais quoi qui montre qu'elles n'ont pas d'existence réelle—que, même fixées sur la toile, elles sont encore en union profonde et discrète avec l'âme de l'artiste. Religieux, profanes, mythologiques, les sujets ne sont pour Rossetti que des prétextes. Sous des formes diverses, il n'exprime jamais que son rêve : les attitudes, les traits, les couleurs, changent—et c'est toujours lui. Rossetti, d'un bout à l'autre de son œuvre, demeure un pur poète. Son dessin est souvent médiocre, avec des fautes évidentes. Presque toutes ses femmes ont des mains trop grandes : très souvent les étoffes qui les drapent paraissent révéler d'étranges imperfections physiques—un bras trop court ou une épaule rentrée. Mais le coloriste fait pardonner les négligences du dessinateur. L'art du peintre demeure intact, en dehors de la technique, dans cette intensité suprême d'expression qu'il parvient à donner à ses figures, sans le secours de grands gestes ni de mouvements violents. C'est là, me semble-t-il, qu'est la valeur artistique des toiles de Rossetti, dont la haute valeur poétique ne supporte

aucun doute : il a compris qu'en une époque toute intellectuelle la peinture elle-même devait obéir au courant général, et poursuivre un autre idéal que celui de la forme pure, et que cet idéal ne pouvait être que *l'expression*. Il a vu que l'attitude la plus calme et le geste le plus lent sont parfaitement compatibles avec la plus grande intensité de la vie intérieure ; et il a rendu à l'art des qualités qu'il avait perdu depuis la Renaissance."

Gabriel Mourey :—

"Au sortir de mes longues haltes devant la divine *Beata Beatrix* et l'enchanteresse *Rosa Triplex* [both in the National Gallery], après tant de visites à travers tant de galeries privées recelant quelque chef-d'œuvre signé des trois initiales bénies [D. G. R.], toujours je me suis senti oppressé par le sentiment de l'inéluctable impuissance des mots à traduire la complexité des sensations, les extatiques vertiges, où venait de me ravir l'irrésistible magie de ce génie exceptionnel et radieux. Quel poète en effet, quel artiste, parla langage plus profond, plus passionné ? Art plein de mystère et d'ardeur, débordant de mélancolie ; art mi-religieux, mi-profane ; art qui atteint les limites dernières de l'expression verbale ou plastique par la seule valeur de l'âme qu'il reflète (en dehors même de toute réalisation technique, parfois incomplète ou avortée) ; art inquiétant de complexité, qui mêle, à l'inspiration renouvelé du plus grand visionnaire des temps, Dante, avec telles réminiscences de l'antiquité et d'un paganisme lumineux, les inquiétudes, les exaspérations vers l'idéal, de l'homme moderne ; art qui se crée à la fois d'images simples, presque naïves, jaillies d'un cour primitif, voilés de mystère septentrional, parmi la fougue épanchée d'un pur sang latin, et les obscurités subtiles d'une nature raffinée d'Anglo-Saxon."

The following is by G. A. Sartorio, a very capable painter, writing in the Italian magazine *Il Convito*. Signor Sartorio (so I gather from his article) has seen not many of the pictures of Dante Rossetti, but judges of him partly from photographs, books, and narratives. I should have regretted to omit from my selection some utterance by a fully qualified Italian upon his semi-compatriot Rossetti, considered as an artist :—

"The struggle arose in the Exhibition of 1850. The picture which Rossetti contributed was *The Annunciation*, now in the National Gallery. The figure of the Virgin, the true gem of the picture, is a very refined figure of a modern Virgin, of child-like garb, painted with rare and loving perfection of form. I incline to trace the ideal descent of this pure physiognomy, of impeccable expression, from the early Flemish paintings, and notably from the works of Memling. Just at that period Dante Gabriel had carried out his tour in Flanders, and had written his sonnets in *The Germ* on Memling and Bruges; and, as I find in the art of the Netherlands a considerable portion of the inspiration, not only of the Præraphaelites but of much English art in general, I conceive that the almost feminine nature of the genius of D. G. Rossetti must necessarily have coalesced with the sentiment of Memling. Rossetti, in all his subsequent works, shows himself imbued with such sentiment—windows from which are to be seen belfries, close gardens, silent canals, fruit-laden plants in damp orchards. The turn of such compositions has no precedents in the English School; and the paintings of Rossetti, with veiled and calm light, with a pious atmosphere which almost brings into the silence of the dwellings the odour of candle and incense, show a clear filiation from the sentiment divined from Memling. . . . While Millais and Hunt were seeking, in the landscape of Surrey or of Palestine copied in the open air, strong but not dusky tones, Rossetti obtained them by daring essays in his studio through improvised overlayings and continual experiments with the palette, animated by the recollection of the brilliant pictures observed in Flanders and in the Louvre. From that period began in him the personal evolution. Rather than search for his design in the fact, he finds it in his own idealisms. Hence, if Hunt may be called the fervid and constant adherent of the first [Præraphaelite] ideal, the evolution in Rossetti, who developed his originality by working his brain in pursuit of his dreams and his passion, penetrates into the laws of the cinquecento, defers to the eclectic of Leonardo, and he becomes (in a strict sense of the word) a Raphaelist. Looking to his successive changes of style, one can easily perceive how rooted in the artist was a tendency to overload his pictures with symbols. The myths and legends are outlived by an æsthetic and moral significance, all the deeper and more human the more it is devoid of self-regarding creed.

Painter and poet, he animates the plastic product with an intimate psychological sense ; and his effort, crowned with achievement, has greater depth than a continuous and personal perfecting of the means."

*Literature.*—A poet praised by the Author of *Atalanta in Calydon* must have something of the same sensation as a king diademed by an emperor ; a fair-minded man—and Dante Rossetti was one—loaded and almost assailed by the sublime rage of generosity of Algernon Swinburne, may perhaps have felt the consciousness of his own blemishes more keenly than that of his powers. At any rate his brother can, on his behalf, feel something of that. Here are a few words extracted from the 29 large pages in which Mr. Swinburne testified of the *Poems* of 1870 :—

"In all great poets there must be an ardent harmony, a heat of spiritual life, guiding without constraining the bodily grace of motion, which shall give charm and power to their least work ; sweetness that cannot be weak, and force that will not be rough. There must be an instinct and a resolution of excellence which will allow no shortcoming or malformation of thought or word. There must also be so natural a sense of right as to make any such deformity or defect impossible, and leave upon the work done no trace of any effort to avoid or to achieve. It must be serious, simple, perfect ; and it must be thus by evident and native impulse. In all these points the style of Mr. Rossetti excels that of any English poet of our day. Much of Mr. Rossetti's work is so intense in aim, so delicate and deep in significance, so exuberant in offshoot and undergrowth of sentiment and thought, that even the sweet lucidity and steady current of his style may not suffice to save it from the charges of darkness and difficulty. He is too great a master of speech to incur the blame of hard or tortuous expression ; and his thought is too sound and pure to be otherwise dark than as a deep wellspring at noon may be, even where the sun is strongest and the water brightest. Colour and sound are servants of his thought, and his thought is servant of his will. The subject-matter of his work is always great and fit ; nothing trivial, nothing illicit, nothing unworthy the workmanship of a master-hand, is to be swept

up from any corner of the floor. There is no misuse or waste of good work on stuff too light or hard to take the impression of his noble style. Among English-speaking poets of his age I know of none who can reasonably be said to have given higher proof of the highest qualities than Mr. Rossetti—if the qualities we rate highest in poetry be imagination, passion, thought, harmony and variety of singing-power.”

From Theodore Watts, who is here writing as much about Rossetti’s fine art and his personality as about his poetry :—

“In permanence of the romantic feeling, in vitality of belief in the power of the unseen, Rossetti stands alone. Even the finest portions of his historical ballad *The King’s Tragedy* are those which deal with the supernatural. In all matters of taste Rossetti’s influence has been immense ; it is doubtful whether any other Victorian poet has left so deep an impression upon the poetic methods of his time. . . . To eliminate asceticism from romantic art, and yet to remain romantic ; to retain that mysticism which alone can give life to romantic art, and yet to be as sensuous as the Titians who revived sensuousness at the sacrifice of mysticism—was the quest, more or less conscious, of Rossetti’s genius. Throughout his life he had taken an interest in only four subjects—poetry, painting, mediæval mysticism, and woman. But then how passionate and how deep had been his interest in all these ! There is not one love-sonnet in his book which is a merely literary production. He was the slave of his own imagination—an imagination of a power and dominance such as I have never seen equalled. Of its vividness no artistic expression of his can give any notion. He had not the smallest command over it.”

Hall Caine :—

“Rossetti’s sonnets are of varied metrical structure ; but their intellectual structure is uniform, comprising in each case a flow and ebb of thought within the limits of a single conception. In this latter respect they have a character almost peculiar to themselves among English sonnets. Rossetti was not the first English writer who deliberately separated octave and sestet ; but he was the first who obeyed, throughout a series of sonnets, the canon of the

contemporary structure requiring that a sonnet shall present the twofold facet of a single thought or emotion. *The House of Life* touches many passions, and depicts life in most of its changeful aspects. It would afford an adequate test of its comprehensiveness to note how rarely a mind in general sympathy with the author could come to its perusal without alighting upon something that would be in harmony with its mood."

Harry Buxton Forman:—

"It is a great treat to come upon a volume bearing a weight of earnestness in every page, and a burden of bestowed care in every line; and such a book must every reader of intelligence find Mr. Rossetti's to be, even in a first skimming perusal. From title-page to imprint no trivial thing is to be found; and from first to last word of each poem, be it never so small or modest, no syllable can be detected standing in its present position without the deliberate sanction of the author's thoughtful consideration visibly stamped upon it. The whole collection is of that rare order that commands immediate admiration, in the occult way wherein an admirable person commands it. . . . An artist whose ideas are thus cut out as it were with a red-hot blade on his very heart cannot always pick and choose his subject; he must often *be chosen by* his subject; but, whatever that be, we may feel sure of large affluent handling, and true human tendencies, and just and masculine views of life."

Joseph Knight:—

"Taken as a whole, this series of sonnets [*The House of Life*] constitutes, in its class, the greatest gift that poetry has received since the days of Shakespear. Individual sonnets as fine as any in *The House of Life* are to be found in Milton, Wordsworth, Mrs. Browning, and some other poets. A series such as this—which is in fact a life's utterance and a life's story—modern literature does not possess. That passages are obscure, and that the sequence of idea is not always to be traced, is true. The same however holds good of every poem written under similar conditions, and in an approximately similar form."

Franz Hueffer :—

“Rossetti has been called a Literary Poet—a poet writing for poets ; and this is true in the sense that his work is never likely to become popular, as Mr. Tennyson’s work is, and Byron’s was, popular. For that purpose he lacks the immediate *rapproch* with contemporary feeling, and that broad human sympathy which Mr. Tennyson alone among living English poets combines with the highest degree of literary refinement. Rossetti, as a rule, takes refuge among the idealized men and women of a remote age, whose thoughts he has fathomed, and whose very language has to some extent become his own. Hence the tone of the popular mediæval ballad struck with rare power in *The King’s Tragedy*. Even Rossetti’s warmest admirers would hardly have given him credit for the power to grapple with a historical subject displayed in this remarkable work—perhaps his masterpiece in narrative poetry, even as *Cloud Confines* is his highest effort in the field of contemplative, not to say philosophic, verse. The defects of ‘literary poetry,’ in the sense above alluded to, are most apparent in the lyrical portion of the present volume, more especially in the sonnets. The poet is supposed to utter his individual feelings ; and our faith in the genuineness of those feelings is somewhat severely shaken if we find that they are clad in a mode of expression which a poet of Dante’s age might have used if he had been able to read Shakespear.”

William Sharp :—

“The ballad can still remain a choice form for expression in more than one direction. It can be an historical or legendary poem treated with the simple directness of the old method, or it can be a dramatic lyric dealing with imaginative creations in place of real personalities and actual facts. The ballad is the lyrically dramatic expression of actions and events in the lives of others. Of the seven published ballads by Rossetti, three belong to the historical or legendary section, three to the section of individual imaginative creation, and one stands midway between these two sections. The three that more or less accurately conform to ballad-requirements are *Stratton Water*, *The King’s Tragedy*, and *The White Ship* ; those that are so strongly marked by individual characteristics and by general style as to be better embraced by the freer term ‘dramatic lyrics,’ or

lyrically dramatic poems, are *Troy Town*, *Eden Bower*, and *Rose Mary*; and the seventh is *Sister Helen*."

Mrs. Esther Wood :—

"No other English poet has resolved the breadth and simplicity of the Gothic, and the depth and intensity of the Italian, habit of expression, into such distinctive poetic vehicles. But at the same time few have blended the diverse elements of the modern English tongue into the harmony and sonority with which Rossetti's music thrills when he tempers the sharper Saxon with a deep undertone of polysyllabic song, or stirs the languorous pulses of a sonnet with some swift cadence of familiar words. . . . *Jenny* perhaps, being cast in a more meditative form, lacks the poignancy and fervour of the utterance which comes, in *A Last Confession*, from the lips of the sinner himself, instead of from the spectator merely; but it surpasses all contemporary studies of its kind in its bold and masterly handling of a difficult theme. . . . Nor is the effect of Rossetti's universal preference for assonance over rhyme—a special characteristic of romantic poetry—identical in the ballads, sonnets, and monologues, just quoted."

I am not quite sure which are the poems to which Mrs. Wood here more especially refers; but I understand that *The Bride's Prelude*, the sonnets *Pandora*, *Fiammetta*, *Found*, *Astarte Syriaca*, and *Mary Magdalene*, *Jenny*, and the translated song in *A Last Confession*, are at all events some of them. Feeling a little startled at the notion that my brother evinced a "universal preference for assonance over rhyme," I looked through the sonnets and the song, and through the first three pages of *The Bride's Prelude* and of *Jenny*. The result is that I find 91 instances of true rhyme, and only 26 instances of what can, even by a stretch of phrase, be called assonance. I concluded by quoting to myself the words in *Hamlet*, "The lady doth protest too much me-thinks." If she had limited herself to saying that, in his various classes of composition, Rossetti showed a liking for mingling assonance amid rhyme, no exception could be taken to that statement.

Coventry Patmore writes :—

“In Rossetti, as in several other modern poets of great reputations we are constantly being pulled up, in the professedly fiery course of a tale of passion, to observe the moss on a rock or the note of a chaffinch. High finish has nothing to do with this quality of extreme definiteness in detail ; indeed, it is more often exercised by the perfect poet in blurring outlines than in giving them acuteness. It must be admitted however that Rossetti had an unusual temptation to this kind of excess in his extraordinary faculty for seeing object, in such a fierce light of imagination as very few poets have been able to throw upon external things. He can be forgiven for spoiling a tender lyric by a stanza such as this, which seems scratched with an adamantine pen upon a slab of agate—

‘But the sea stands spread  
As one wall with the flat skies,  
Where the lean black craft, like flies,  
Seem wellnigh stagnated,  
Soon to drop off dead.’

In much of his work there is a rich and obscure glow of insight into depths too profound and too sacred for clear speech, even if they could be spoken ; a sort of insight not at all uncommon in the great art of past times, but exceedingly rare in the art of our own.”

F. W. H. Myers :—

“He is not a prophet, but an artist ; yet an artist who, by the very intensity of his artistic vision, and by some inborn bent towards symbol and mysticism, stands on the side of those who see in material things a spiritual significance, and utters words of universal meaning from the fullness of his own heart.”

William Morris :—

“It is certainly to be wondered at that a master in the supremely difficult art of painting should have qualities which enable him to deal with the other supremely difficult one of poetry ; and to do this not only with the utmost depth of feeling and thought but also with the most complete and unfaltering mastery over its material ; that he should find in its limitations and special conditions, not stumbling-blocks or fetters, but just so many pleasures, so much

whetting of invention and imagination. In no poems is the spontaneous and habitual interpenetration of matter and manner, which is the essence of poetry, more complete than in these. Among pieces where the mystical feeling is by necessity of subject most simple and most on the surface, *The Blessed Damozel* should be noticed; a poem in which wild longing, and the shame of life, and despair of separation, and the worship of love, are wrought into a palpable dream, in which the heaven that exists as if for the sake of the beloved is as real as the earthly things about the lover, while these are scarcely less strange, or less pervaded with a sense of his passion, than the things his imagination has made. . . . I think these lyrics, with all their other merits, the most *complete* of their time. No difficulty is avoided in them—no subject is treated vaguely, languidly, or heartlessly. As there is no commonplace or second-hand thought left in them, to be atoned for by beauty of execution, so no thought is allowed to overshadow that beauty of art which compels a real poet to speak in verse and not in prose. Nor do I know what lyrics of any time are to be called *great* if we are to deny that title to these.”

Walter Pater :—

“The reader of to-day may observe already, in *The Blessed Damozel* written at the age of eighteen, a prefigurement of the chief characteristics of that [Præraphaelite] school. Common to that school and to him [Rossetti], and in both alike of primary significance, was the quality of sincerity—a perfect sincerity, taking effect in the deliberate use of the most direct and unconventional expression for the conveyance of a poetic sense which recognized no conventional standard of what poetry was called upon to be. Here was certainly one new poet more, with an accent which might count as the very seal of reality on one man’s proper speech—as that speech itself was the wholly natural expression of certain wonderful things he really felt and saw. The lovely little landscapes scattered up and down his poems—glimpses of a landscape not indeed of broad open-air effects, but rather that of a painter concentrated upon the picturesque effect of one or two selected objects at a time—attest, by their very freshness and simplicity, to a pictorial or descriptive power, in dealing with the inanimate world, which is certainly still one half of the charm in that other, more remote and

mystic, use of it. For with Rossetti this sense of (after all, lifeless) Nature is translated to a higher service in which it does but incorporate itself with some phase of strong emotion. A sustained impressibility towards the mysterious conditions of man's every-day life, towards the very mystery itself in it, gives a singular gravity to all his work. For Rossetti the great affections of persons to each other—swayed and determined, in the case of his highly pictorial genius, mainly by that so called 'material' loveliness—formed the great undeniable reality in things, the solid resisting substance in a world where all beside might be but shadow. One monumental lyrical piece, *Soothsay*, testifies—more clearly even than the *Nineveh*—to the reflective force, the dry reason, always at work behind his imaginative creations, which at no time dispensed with a genuine intellectual structure. His characteristic, his really revealing, work lay in the adding to poetry of fresh poetic material, of a new order of phenomena—in the creation of a new ideal."

Madame Darmesteter (Miss Mary Robinson):—

"A very few weeks after publication [of the *Poems*, 1870] he was generally admitted to be one of the greatest of living English poets. In passing, I would point out the chief features of this work by a poet of great imaginative penetration who had the signal good fortune to express his subtle and rare ideas with the vivid presentation of the painter. Even the descriptions of unearthly phenomena convey a sense of actual vision. The solemn pity and tenderness of *Jenny*, the angelic beauty of *The Blessed Damsel*, the tragic force of *Sister Helen*, are qualities that only great poets possess. But more solemn, more beautiful, more full of a finer force, than these poems, are the unrivalled sonnets which build-up *The House of Life*. Here, for the first time since Milton, the English language is used with a sonority and power rivalling the natural harmonies of Italian or Greek. A singular value is given to the motive of these sonnets by the poet's belief in the eternal effect and continual existence of the thoughts and deeds of man."

James Skelton:—

"Mr. Rossetti is never desultory nor garrulous. His poems display the highest concentration of the poetic faculty. They are terse as epigrams. Mr. Rossetti seldom uses a metaphor. There

is little or no colour in his poems. He never indulges in elaborate portraiture. But the pure idea is presented to us with surpassing clearness. He realizes the emotion in the most absolute way. The fire of his imagination is a spiritual flame which consumes whatever is not essential."

Gabriel Sarrazin :—

"Voici donc qu'elle reparait, mais plus endolorie et comme rajeunie d'alanguissement tout moderne, l'antique extase de Dante. De longues visions claires, d'une plastique achevée, ou de courtes exaltations, d'une quintessence de rêve presque nébuleuse, nous en déroulent les mystiques péripéties. À une époque où l'idée de l'amour s'est appauvrie ou matérialisée, où l'invasion des mille petits besoins de l'esprit bourgeois, s'implantant sur la ruine totale des deux ou trois grands instincts de l'esprit chevaleresque, a tué pour jamais les passions dont vivaient les amoureux de la Renaissance ; dans un âge, en outre, où l'amour platonique n'est plus qu'une affectation, où qui 'veut faire l'ange fait la bête' ; dans cet âge-là Rossetti est un des seuls (avec Lamartine) à oser réarborer, en parfaite sincérité de cœur, le grand Amour extatique des moines et des chevaliers. Non pas qu'il n'y ait dans son œuvre des adorations teintées de sensualité : il y en a, et la plus exquise pudeur y préside. Mais dans les grandes pièces, dans les pièces tout à fait significatives, dans celles où l'âme travaille à se détacher des entraves terrestres qui l'empêchent d'atteindre au divin, c'est à dire à l'Immatériel, on sent qu'elle échappe, vers par vers, à ses tyrans, et qu'un dernier effort va libérer son vol."

Luigi Gamberale, who has translated into Italian verse Rossetti's *Last Confession*, *Jenny*, and some other compositions, expresses himself thus with regard to Mr. Swinburne's criticism, already cited in this section :—

"This is simply the reasoned impression of a great poet, who sees realized the ideal which he had conceived of a perfect writer. And, since the ideal is very high, and the critic bears the name of Swinburne, we may securely rest upon the truth and the soundness of his judgment. Yet in some points he has gone beyond the mark. I too fancy that I have sometimes observed the obscurity of Rossetti ;

and, if Swinburne explains and excuses it with his image of the 'wellspring,' it might perchance, following that same image, be remarked that no eye in the world can without blinking scan a deep water which glisters in the rays of a meridian sun."

There are other translations of Rossetti's works to which I ought to spare a word of acknowledgment: into Italian, *The Blessed Damozel*, by Signor Ettore Ciccotti; into French, *The House of Life*, by Madame Clémence Couve; into Danish, some sonnets by Herr Adolf Hansen. And assuredly these are not all. I should have liked moreover to quote something, about either pictures or poems, from Messrs. Comyns Carr, Symonds, Ashcroft Noble, Hardinge, Colvin, and Frederick Cooper, Professor Dowden, and Dr. Westland Marston; but considerations of space have admonished me to the contrary.

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Here I close. I have tried to pay my fraternal debt to the memory of Dante Gabriel Rossetti; a memory and a name honoured throughout and beyond the precincts of the two noble lands of his origin.











